

J.C. PHILPOT
SERMONS VOLUME 3

1842 to 1843

J.C. Philpot

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Sermons

Volume 3
1842-1843

Strict and Particular Baptist Minister
For 26 years

He held a joint pastorate at Stamford (Lines) and Oakham (Rutland) Strict and Particular Baptists

Was the Joint editor of the Gospel Standard Magazine, launched in 1835, with John Mackenzie, till 1849 when he became the sole editor.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joseph Charles Philpot (1802 – 1869) was known as “The Seceder”. He resigned from the Church of England in 1835 and became a Strict & Particular Baptist minister.



J C Philpot

While with the Church of England he was a Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford. After becoming a Strict and Particular Baptist he became the Editor of the Gospel Standard magazine and served in that capacity for twenty years.

Educated at Oxford University, he was elected a fellow of Worcester College, and appeared to have a brilliant scholastic career before him. But he was brought into solemn concern spiritually and the Lord led him into the ministry. He first preached in the Established Church at Stadhampton (Oxfordshire). In 1835, however, he was constrained, for the truth's sake, to sever his connection with the Church of England and to resign his curacy and his fellowship. The letter to the provost stating his reasons was published and went into several editions.

The same year, he was baptized by John Warburton at Allington (Wilts). The rest of his life was spent ministering among the

Strict Baptists. For 26 years, he held a joint pastorate at Stamford (Lines) and Oakham (Rutland). In addition for over twenty years, he was editor of "The Gospel Standard", where many of his sermons first appeared.

"My desire is to exalt the grace of God; to proclaim salvation alone through Jesus Christ; to declare the sinfulness, helplessness and hopelessness of man in a state of nature; to describe the living experience of the children of God in their trials, temptations, sorrows, consolations and blessings."

J. C. Philpot.

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38 AN ACCEPTABLE PRESENT TO THE LORD OF HOSTS

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, London,
Un-known date 1843

“In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of Hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto: a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the Lord of Hosts, the Mount Zion.” Isa 18:7

When presents are made to earthly monarchs, they are almost always of a costly and valuable nature. In fact, it would seem an insult to offer to an earthly monarch any present that did not, in some degree, correspond to the exalted situation, which he occupies. But “Gods thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways his ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts” (Isa. 55:8, 9)

“The present” that is “brought unto the Lord of Hosts,” spoken of in the text, is of a very different character from what is usually offered to earthly sovereigns. A nation flourishing in arts and arms, occupying a fertile and extensive territory, carrying on a wide and lucrative commerce, and sending its fleets and armies all over the globe—such a people might well be a present acceptable to an earthly monarch. But when we look at the text, and see what sort of people is presented to the Lord of Hosts, we find a nation of a very different character brought unto him. We read there of a people “scattered and peeled,” of a nation “meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled;” and that this broken, and, as they might naturally be called, useless people, are brought “to the place of the name of the Lord of Hosts, the Mount Zion,” as an acceptable offering to him who lives and reigns there.

Now, reason would dictate, and, indeed, it is the prevalent religion of the day, that an offering, which is to be made to the Lord of

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Hosts, should be such a one as agrees with his holy and righteous character. We find, therefore, the generality of ministers exhorting everybody to give to the Lord the prime of their life, their strongest affections, their noblest mental and bodily faculties, with all the piety, zeal, diligence, and holiness that they can muster, and to lay them down at the feet of the Lord of Hosts as an offering acceptable in his sight. And though this never is done, and, from the utterly fallen state of man, never can be done, we find the preachers no less constantly exhorting, and the people no less perpetually approving of this as the only excellent way.

But when we look at the text (and we must adhere to the word of God, however contrary to our carnal reason) we find that “the present which is to be brought to the Lord of Hosts,” is not of a righteous people, a people zealous, and diligent, a people active in good words and works, “but people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the Lord of Hosts, the Mount Zion.” Without further preface then, I shall, from these words, endeavour, with Gods blessing, to describe what the character, the experimental character I mean, of that people is which is “brought as a present unto the Lord of Hosts.”

But we must bear in mind that the people of God are always to be looked at in two points of view. First, as standing in the Son of God, their eternal Covenant Head; and, secondly, as standing in Adam, their temporal covenant head. Viewed in Christ, they stand accepted in him “without spot or blemish, or any such thing.” The church, as an unspotted, lovely bride, was betrothed unto Christ in eternity before ever she fell in Adam. Thus in this sense therefore, the church, as the spotless wife of the Lamb, is a present fit for the Lord of Hosts, for she stands righteous in Christs righteousness, holy in Christs holiness, comely in Christs comeliness, and perfect in Christs perfection. But, viewed in fallen Adam, as a partaker of his depraved nature, and viewed experimentally when brought

to know the plague of her heart, she stands “full of wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.”

The people spoken of in the text, as presented to the Lord of Hosts, correspond to the church in this latter point of view. We will, therefore, with Gods blessing, examine in detail the description here given of them; and I think we shall find six distinct marks stamped upon them by the blessed Spirit. These six marks are, that they are “scattered,” “peeled,” “terrible,” “meted out,” “trodden under foot,” and their land one which “the rivers have spoiled.” Every one of these striking epithets deserves, and, therefore, demands a distinct and separate examination.

The Holy Ghost, then, has stamped the people of God in the text with these peculiar marks; for I do not consider that, experimentally viewed, a particular section, a distinct part of Gods people, are here intended, as though some experience were described in the text which a few only of the living family are acquainted with. But I view the text as descriptive of all the family of God, and that the marks stamped upon them here are such as are universally affixed to all the manifested election of grace.

I. The first mark stamped upon the people of God is that they are a “scattered” people. Considered even locally, as far as their earthly habitations are concerned, we find this “scattered” condition of Gods people to be a matter of fact, a thing of daily and universal experience. Wherever we go we find that the people of God are a scattered family. It was so in times of old. The church at Jerusalem was speedily “scattered” abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria (Acts 8:1). James writes “to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (James 1:1); and Peter to “the strangers scattered throughout Pontus...” (1Peter 1:1). Thus now we do not find whole towns and villages of Gods people, but dispersed by twos and threes through the country; a few in one town, and a few in another; one or two in this village, and one or two in that; generally the butt and scoff of all the rest; abhorred by a world lying dead in sin. And, indeed, when we consider how few in number

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Gods quickened people are, it must needs be so. The world at large “lieth in wickedness,” while the elect are but “one of a city, and two of a family” (the subdivision of a tribe) (Jeremiah 3:14), “two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof.”

But the word “scattered” not merely implies their dispersion, locally considered—that they are a scanty, and, therefore, a scattered people, but it also has reference to the work of the blessed Spirit in their souls, as making them to be internally, what they are externally—scattered in feelings as well as in persons.

When the Holy Ghost takes a vessel of mercy in hand, his first work is to scatter. He moves in that track which he gave to Jeremiah when he commissioned him “to root out and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down,” as well as “to build, and to plant.” This divine work was known experimentally by Hannah when she said, “The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up: The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up” (1Samuel 2:6,7). The first work, then, of the Spirit of God in the heart is to scatter to the four winds of heaven everything in self that is comely and pleasing to the flesh. All a mans self-righteousness when the Lord lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet is broken to pieces. We may, indeed, with much pains, great diligence, and severe labour, gather together the broken fragments: but no sooner have we got together what the Spirit has dispersed than the Lord blows upon them again and scatters them once more to the four corners of the earth.

Nor is his self-righteousness, his legal obedience, and his hope of heaven founded thereon, scattered only, but that also which wears an evangelical garb, such as all his holiness and all his attempts to make himself spiritual, all his diligence to recommend himself to the favour of God by laying hold of the gospel, with all his anxiety to read, understand, and experimentally enjoy the word of God, all that he would thus heap up, and fain persuade himself that by so doing he was a believer in Christ, is scattered

and dispersed: so that when he looks at his religion he finds it a thorough wreck. His religion now no longer resembles a ship in harbour, with all her masts, and yards, and rigging perfect, just ready to ride proudly over the wide waste of waters, but it rather resembles the same ship driven by a storm upon the rocks, with the waves beating over her, and just about to part asunder.

The Spirit of the Lord is compared in Scripture to the north wind ("Awake, O north wind,") (Song 4:16), which is rough and searching, and blows away the chaff from the threshing floors. It is the blowing of this north wind, which tries the living family before they are led to see what the mind of the Spirit is in thus acting. They try sometimes, for instance, to collect their thoughts in prayer, and fix their affections upon God: but all is scattered in a moment. They look at their evidences, try to bring them together, and out of them to make a good hope through grace: but when they come to weigh them up singly one by one, a gust of conviction or of doubt springs up which so scatters all these evidences that there seems to be scarcely one left. They seek after spirituality of mind, and to have their affections set on things above, not on things on the earth. But no sooner do they feel their hearts and affections mounting upwards, than some vile thought rushes in, which brings a train of others, like a troop of unclean birds falling upon a sacrifice. When they come to a place of worship they beg, perhaps, with some earnestness on the road, that the word may come to their souls with power from God himself: but no sooner does the preacher begin his prayer or sermon than something carnal, sensual, or devilish rushes into their minds, or some gust of unbelief or infidelity blows across them which scatters all their thoughts, and leaves them no collectedness, fixedness, or attention. Thus, to their dismay, instead of being able to get together a religion in which they may stand firm; instead of amassing a store of hopes and evidences to which they may confidently look as a safe and happy passport into eternity, the more they look the less religion they find; and all that they have gathered together becomes

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one mass of confusion. This was the case with Job when the Lord had scattered his religion, when, as Elihu said, "God thrusteth him down, not man" (Job 32:13), and he poured forth that bitter lamentation, "I am full of confusion."

II. But we will go on to consider another mark stamped upon them—"peeled." In order to get at the spiritual meaning of this expression, I must call your attention to what is written in (Ezekiel 29:18), where the Lord said to his prophet—"Son of Man, Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled." But what made their shoulders peel? The burdens which they bore. The soldiers in Nebuchadnezzars army had to carry the mattock and spade, to throw up the fortifications against Tyre. The soldiers in ancient times wore very heavy armour, and carried upon their shoulders spears and other weapons of war, by the continual pressure of which the skin was often literally peeled off. Thus, when the nation spoken of in the text is said to be "peeled," it implies that they are a burdened people, nay, more, that they are a continually burdened people. It was not one days service before Tyre that made the shoulders of Nebuchadnezzars army peel, but the continued labours which they were called to perform, the unceasing burdens which they had to bear. And thus the expression in the text implies that the people of God are not burdened merely once or twice in their lives; but that theirs is an unceasing warfare, a succession of burdens, and that they can never put their armour off, or lay the weapons of their spiritual warfare aside, but that they must continue to watch and fight, toil and suffer to the end of their days as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

This mark, then, demolishes at a blow all those crude fancies and visionary ideas of men, who assert that the child of God never has but one spiritual burden in his life, that of sin under the law, when first quickened into spiritual life; and that, when relieved of that load by a gospel deliverance, he never more groans under the weight of sin, but rejoices and triumphs in Christ over death, sin,

and hell, until he changes time for eternity. One would think that the testimony of Paul was sufficient to disprove this when he said, "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened" (2Corinthians 5:4); and again, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But I think that the simple expression of the text, that the people who are brought as a present to the Lord of Hosts are "a peeled people," is sufficient to shew that the family of God are appointed to wear upon their shoulders continual burdens.

But what are these burdens? The burden of sin is one which the children of God more especially labour under in the first teachings of the Spirit; and this at that time not so much from the workings of their corrupt nature, into the desperate depravity of which they are not at first usually led, but from the guilt of actual sin committed by them. But there is also the burden of temptation, which never seizes a man so powerfully as after he has known something of the power of atoning blood. And thus the people of God who, in their first exercises, have to bear heavy burdens of guilt and convictions of sin, after they have received some manifestations of Gods favour, have to bear the burden of temptation. Indeed Gods children could not bear the heavy burdens of temptation at first. The raw recruit, who is learning his drill on the common, is not sent into battle immediately. He has to be taught how to handle and use his arms and all the exercises needful to make him into a soldier, before he can endure actual service. So the child of God is not sent to fight Gods battles when merely learning his drill. But when he is, in some degree, inured in service, then he is sent to undergo the actual hardship of war.

Unless a living soul has some standing ground in Christ, he cannot endure the burden of temptation. If the powerful blasts of temptation came upon one who had no standing in the divine life, they would sweep him away. But when the Lord has given the soul some standing in Christ, through some knowledge of him, it is founded upon a rock, so that however assaulted and apparently

overwhelmed, it is not carried away by the floods of temptation that come out of the dragon. Infancy, naturally, is not the season for hard labour. On whom do we lay the heaviest burdens? The child or the man? Who are selected to carry the greatest weights? The weak or the strong? Is it not in grace as it is in nature that the stronger the man the heavier the burden? the broader the shoulders the weightier the load? How unscriptural, then, as well as how contrary to the teachings of the Spirit in exercised souls, is that vain idea that a man, after his first convictions and deliverance, is to slumber in his arm chair for the rest of his life, as a pensioner who has obtained his discharge, never again to see the flash of the sabre, or hear the thunder of the artillery. Such a doctrine as this is contradicted by the experience of the saints in all ages. These have ever found that the stronger a man is in Christ the heavier are his burdens; the richer his enjoyment of the love of God, the more powerful are his temptations: the firmer his standing in the Son of God, the more fellowship has he with Christ in his sufferings.

But the leading and special idea contained in the expression "peeled," is a feeling of soreness and rawness. The skin peeled off makes the shoulder additionally pained by the burdens laid upon it. Thus the consciences of Gods living family are tender, and very susceptible of impressions. And herein they mainly differ from dead, hardened professors. Temptations are no burden to a seared conscience. The internal enmity of the human heart against God, the foul obscenities and daring blasphemies that the prince of darkness breathes into the carnal mind, are no burden to a man dead in a profession: nor, usually speaking, are they acquainted with the one, or assaulted by the other.

But when the conscience is made and kept alive before God, and the heart is tender and contrite so as to feel the impression of the divine fingers, when it is thus tremblingly and shrinkingly alive to the slightest touch of the heavenly hand, it is in an equal and similar degree sensitive also to temptation. And the more tender the conscience is, the more poignantly, for the most part, will

temptations be felt. The more alive that the fear of God is in the heart, the more clearly will sin be perceived, and the more will it be hated and abhorred. You may depend upon it, that no persons are further from God than those who are really Antinomians. I say really such, for the name is often falsely applied to such as believe and preach a free-grace gospel, and walk in the fear of the Lord. But I mean such characters in the professing church as “continue in sin, that grace may abound,” and, under shelter of the doctrines of grace, live and act contrary to the precepts of the gospel. “O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united.” I would as soon think of uniting with notorious drunkards and libertines as with high professing Calvinists who, by their loose talk and conversation, cause the truth to be evil spoken of.

III. The third mark given of this people is that they are “from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto,” that is, up to the time when the present was made. There is a little difficulty in the language of the text here; it says, “and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto;” as though the people scattered and peeled, were to be taken out of another people who were terrible. This need not, however, create, I think, an insuperable obstacle. The word “from” seems to have reference to the word “present:” and as we read that the present is to be made “of a people scattered and peeled,” so the present “from a people terrible from their beginning,” appears simply to mean that the people who are terrible are made a present of to the Lord. This seems to harmonize best with the general drift of the text. This expression terrible seems to my mind to carry with it two ideas. First, that they were spiritually acquainted with the terrors of God: and, secondly, that they were a terror to others. Now all the family of God, each in his measure (though we can lay down no standard of depth or duration) must know something of Jehovah as terrible in majesty: must have a sense in their souls of his inflexible justice, his hatred of evil, his eternal purity, and spotless holiness.

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I am not going to define—I think it impossible to define, as I just now hinted—how deep those convictions shall be, or how long they shall last; but I believe every living soul, before it passes from time into eternity, must see something of Gods countenance as of purer eyes than to behold evil, and thus come before him with “reverence and godly fear.” It would appear that the people here spoken of were “terrible from their beginning hitherto,” that is, that they knew more or less of the Lord as terrible in majesty all through the stages of their spiritual life up to the moment of which the text speaks—till they were presented to the Lord of Hosts. Not that they knew him as such always, that is, continually, prolongedly as such; but that from time to time there were flashes in their conscience, whereby God was made known to them as terrible in majesty.

For instance, if they were overtaken by any backsliding, the terrors of God were arrayed against them. If they gave way to base lusts, the terrors of Gods holy countenance were made manifest in their souls. If they were caught by idolatrous affections, or entangled in the base workings of their carnal mind, they could not cloak these things over before the eyes of him with whom they had to do. They could not treat sin as a light matter, or say, “my sins are all washed away, and now sin and I have shaken hands and become good friends. It can do me no harm, nor destroy my soul.” The living family, whose consciences have been made tender, cannot indulge such presumptuous notions, for they feel the flashes of Gods anger against sin in their consciences: and whatever sweet sense they may have had of the mercy of God in the face of Jesus Christ, sin will be ever a terror to them. Though there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, yet there will always be, as the case of David sufficiently proves, anger in the mind of God against the sin of his people.

But there is another sense in which we may take the word terrible, and that is, that the people of God are a terror to others. We find this intimated in the two witnesses mentioned in (Revelation

11:1). We read there of two witnesses who were to “prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth,” and were “the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth” (Revelation 11:3,4). I believe that these two witnesses, primarily and chiefly, signify the ministers of Gods truth; and that they are two in number, agreeably to that word—”In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” But, in a secondary sense, every manifested child of God is a witness for God and his truth. “Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God” (Isaiah 43:12).

Now it is said of these witnesses that they “tormented them that dwelt on the earth;” and, therefore, when they were slain, those “that dwelt upon the earth rejoiced over them, and made merry, and sent gifts one to another;” so glad were they to get rid of them. Thus not only every faithful minister of Gods truth, but every quickened child of God also torments those that dwell upon the earth, that is, the carnal, who make the earth their paradise and home, and all whose affections are earthly and sensual. Every one in whose heart is the fear of the Lord, is, in a measure, a terror to the carnal. Paul made Felix tremble; and John Knox struck terror into the heart of Mary, Queen of Scots. There is an indescribable something in a child of God, which carries conviction even to those who are enemies to vital godliness. Their very principles are a terror to them. The doctrines of grace, for instance, which they hold, torment, and are a terror to Arminians, and their godly and consistent life makes them terrible to Antinomians. As, when Moses came down from the mount, his face shone, and the people “were afraid to come nigh him” (Exodus 34:30), the beams of divine communion visible in him striking a secret awe into their consciences, so “the divine nature” of which the people of God are “partakers” (2Peter 1:4), that is “the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” strikes a secret terror into the ungodly. Their very presence infuses a secret awe.

Let, for instance, any one of you who is known to be one of

the sect everywhere spoken against, go into a chapel where there is a dead minister in the pulpit, you strike him with more awe than a thousand of his usual congregation. He hates you and yet he fears you: for he knows you are a witness against him. Thus the people of God are a terror to the carnal; and God means them to be such. When they cease to be a terror to others, when they cease to torment them that dwell upon the earth, they cease to deliver a faithful testimony. O may I be a terror to Gods enemies! O may God so endue me with the Holy Ghost that I may so take forth the precious from the vile, and preach his word with such faithfulness and power, as to make myself terrible to all his enemies; whether they are despisers of grace, or pretenders to grace; whether they grovel in the sink hole of Arminianism, or are towering on the barren heights of dead Calvinism. And terrible “from their beginning” too.

From the first day that the people of God are quickened to fear his great name, they are terrible to the carnal, and sometimes, perhaps, more then, in the early warmth of their zeal and boldness, than afterwards. We may, in some degree, measure the strength and activity of the divine life in our souls by this test; for directly we turn aside unto evil, and the power of that holy anointing is diminished which makes us a terror to others, we fall from the position in which God has placed us; and from our high standing as witnesses of the truth as it is in Jesus. Samson, with his locks cut, struck no terror into the Philistines.

IV. But to pass on. The next mark of this peculiar people is, that they are “meted out.” The word “mete,” is the old English word for “measure.” “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” This people, then, that are to be presented to the Lord of Hosts are a nation “meted out,” that is, measured up. This expression points not so much to their persons as to their religion; and declares that their faith is tried in the furnace. Their experience is measured by Gods standard, and thus judgment is laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet in their souls.

Most certainly wherever God the Holy Ghost begins and carries on a work of grace in the heart, he will weigh up, and mete out, from time to time, all a mans religion, and try every inch of the way whether it lies straight and level with the word and will of God. Depend upon it that the Lord who "weigheth the spirits" (Proverbs 16:2), and by whom "actions are weighed" (1Samuel 2:3), will put into his righteous and unerring scales both nature and grace, both human and divine teaching, and make us know which is full weight in heavens court.

The religion of the present day is too much to confuse everything of an experimental nature; to cover and obscure the work of grace in the heart. There is even among those who are sound in the doctrines of truth little or no discrimination of character, no appealing to conscience, no tracing out the lines of distinction between grace and nature, no exposing the awful delusions of Satan as an angel of light, no pointing out the dreadful deceitfulness and hypocrisy of our fallen nature. But the generally approved and well nigh universally followed system is to throw around all professors, whose creed is sound and life consistent, a mantle of universal charity, and ask them no inconvenient questions. But there can be no question that God will never suffer our religion, if, indeed, he has mercifully taken us in hand, to be huddled up in this confused way; but he will measure it all by his standard, and refine it in his crucible. It is in this way that we learn the reality and genuineness of his work. Thus, if he give faith, he will bring that faith to the touchstone, and prove it with heavy trials.

It is in grace as in nature. When we would ascertain the exact weight of a thing, we put it into one scale, and a standard weight into the other, till the scales are even. So when the Lord puts faith in one scale, he puts a burden in the other to try whether it is standard weight. And the greater the faith the heavier the trial. The father of the faithful had to slay his own son. If he communicate a measure of hope, there will be many things that cause despondency to be put into the opposite scale, that despondency and hope

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may be well balanced. If the love of God be shed abroad in the soul, there will be trials and temptations to prove it. Thus the child of God learns the meaning of the words. "Your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope" (1Thessalonians 1:3). Every token for good, every sip of mercy, every manifestation of love is examined and searched into, weighed up and balanced in the court of conscience, to know whether it is full weight or not. And in this nice and accurate scrutiny not only is religion weighed up, but also that which is not religion. Sins, open and secret, backslidings, idolatrous affections, covetous desires, presumptuous confidences, rotten hopes, and vain props—all are weighed up in the balances of the sanctuary. And as that which is received from God, when put into the balances, will be found sterling and genuine; so all that did not come from God, all that sprang from nature and the flesh, all vain confidence, bold claims, and presumptuous notions, when put into the scales, will have tekel stamped upon them—"Weighed in the balances, and found wanting."

It is thus that "the dross is taken away from the silver, and there comes forth a vessel for the finer." This is the trial of faith, which is to be "found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1Peter 1:7). This is the rod upon the lot of the children; for "judgment must begin at the house of God; the righteous scarcely be saved;" and the Lord "sits as a refiner and purifier of silver to purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto him an offering in righteousness."

And now tell me, soul, what is thy case? Do you know anything of this measuring work? Is your religion, more or less, daily and weekly weighed in the unerring balances of the sanctuary? And do you find a secret hand in your conscience, that from time to time, as it were, takes your religion and measures it before your eyes, stamping some as genuine, and some as false; some as from God and some as from Satan; some as the fruit of heavenly teaching, and some as springing from a deceitful and hypocritical heart? Be assured, if you are a people to be presented to the Lord of Hosts,

in the day when he maketh up his jewels, your religion must be weighed in Gods balances, and stamped by him as genuine before you close your eyes in death.

V. A fifth mark given in the text of this accepted people is, that they are “trodden under foot.”

This expression seems to indicate two things—firstly, the treatment they receive from a world lying dead in sin and dead in a profession: and secondly, the feelings that pass through their own hearts. If God has made your hearts honest before him, if he has communicated spiritual life to your souls, you will be “trodden under foot.” The world, dead in sin, will trample you beneath their proud hoofs; and the world, dead in profession, will make your body as the ground, and as the street that they may go over. The laws of our land may, indeed, prevent any such literal treatment of our persons: but do they spare what is equally, in our right minds, dear to us? Does not the self-righteous Arminian tread under foot the doctrines we dearly love? Does he not call them doctrines, which lead to licentiousness, and say that they are the invention of men, the fruit of a heated brain, and not to be found in the Scripture? Nay, have not some, in the height of their zeal for freewill, gone so far as to call them “doctrines of devils,” and “damnable doctrines,” awful speeches indeed to come from the mouths of professing men.

And as the Arminian, on the one side, will trample down the doctrines, so will the notional Calvinist, on the other, tread under foot your experience, and stamp his iron-bound heel upon all the convictions of your burdened spirit, and the trials of your troubled soul. Those who are at ease in Zion, dwelling “careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure” (Judges 18:7), who are never exercised or tempted, but “lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall,” and, therefore, “are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph” (Amos 6:4, 6), will trample under foot the exercises, temptations, and burdens

of living souls. And of all professors, none, I believe, will trample under foot the living family more than conscience-seared Antinomians. The godly fear, the tenderness of conscience, the respect to the Lords ordinances, and the obedience to his precepts which the regenerated family manifest, provoke the contempt and enmity of those who have a scheme of doctrines clear in their brain, but whose hearts are rotten as touchwood. Nor will they shew less contempt of your rising hopes and tender affections, and all the ebbs and flowings of divine life in your soul: despising and treading under foot everything short of or different from, the presumptuous confidence in which they stand themselves.

Expect, if you are a people whom God has formed for himself to shew forth his praise, to be trodden under foot: to have your motives misrepresented, your words to be the butt of calumny, and your actions to become food for the lying tongue to propagate its malicious falsehoods. To be despised and contemned of all men, and yet to be beloved and blessed by their God is the universal lot of all the living in Jerusalem.

But there is another sense in which we may understand the expression, “trodden under foot,” and that is, as I have hinted before, in the feelings of their own hearts. In this sense they may be said to tread themselves under foot. In my right mind, I seem to care little to be trodden under foot by the contempt of professor and profane. I have, indeed, even felt pleasure at being counted worthy to suffer reproach for Christs sake. But to be trodden under foot by myself; to feel that I deserve to be trodden under the righteous feet of Jehovah into a never-ending hell, and on account of my numerous and base iniquities to merit to be trodden under foot by the saints of God—this, this cuts deep.

And not only so, but to have myself to trample down all that I once thought was religion, my holiness, piety, and consistency, zeal, knowledge, and devotedness, to have to take them with my own hands, and cast them on the stones, and trample them under feet—this cuts deeper still. But the Lord will bring us to this spot,

to tread under foot all creature-righteousness, and natural piety, as well as all the zeal, activity, and restless diligence that springs from, and feeds the flesh. As Babylons children, they must be taken and dashed against the stones (Psalm 137:9). God will teach us, sooner or later, to trample under foot everything but the blood and righteousness of the Lamb as our salvation and justification: and to reject all wisdom that does not spring out of himself.

VI. The last mark which is given in the text of this peculiar people is, "Whose land the rivers have spoiled." This people, then, had once a land: yea, what they thought was a goodly land, one rich in natural gifts, and teeming with everything bright to the eye, and alluring to the senses. This is the land of our nativity, our "Ur of the Chaldees," our Egypt. What a fair and bright land was this in the days of our romantic youth! And have we not in those days, stood, as it were, upon some lofty height, and looked with eager delight upon the scene of happiness that we fancied lay outstretched before us, promising to ourselves days of health, and wealth, and comfort in this world? But the rivers have spoiled the land. The waters of Gods providential dispensations have flowed over it, and utterly marred it. Instead of being now a fair land, it has become a sandbank. We were looking for happiness in the things of time and sense. Some bosom idol, some bright prospect, some well-planned scheme, some dream of love or ambition was to be our paradise; not knowing that the sword of the cherubim, which turned every way, was planted at the gate. Rivers have burst forth from unexpected quarters, and forever spoiled that land for our resting place.

But, again, there is another land, which we once fancied to be fair and beautiful—the land of natural religion. We cultivated with much pains and diligence the soil of our own hearts—we toiled, dug, and planted; but reaped not; sowed, but gathered no crop into the garner. The rivers of conviction, flowing out of the sanctuary, spoiled the land. Have you not found, that when you were cultivating piety, a flood of conviction broke out and spoiled all the crop? Or when you had ploughed, and sowed, and harrowed the

field, and were looking forward to the growth of diligence, zeal, prayer, praise, faith, hope and love, instead of finding a harvest to reap, a flood of doubt and fear, conviction and distress, burst forth, and carried away not only the crop, but well nigh the cultivator himself. And yet, perhaps, when the flood had gone off, and the rivers a little ceased from the land, you began to cultivate it again. After the crop was swept away, you tried hard after another; but no sooner did you begin to work, and get the seed sown, and the field in a husband-like order, than the rivers flowed over it, and spoiled it again.

But there is another sense in which the words may be taken; and that is as indicating the rivers of mercy and peace that flow out of the love of God through the channel of the Saviours blood. What is this world? It is polluted. It is not our rest. It is defiled by sin, and marred by sorrow, so that a child of God can here find no abiding city. Rivers of conviction out of God as a God of justice, and of mercy out of God as a God of love, flowing in different channels, but tending to the same purpose, have spoiled the land: and it is a fair and goodly land no more.

Here, then, is a description of the people of God, of those that are to be presented to the Lord of Hosts. Does it not seem a singular description? It is not, indeed, generally received by the professors of the day, but that does not alter its reality or its truth. But there is a certain period spoken of in the text when they are to be presented, for it says, "In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of Hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the Lord of Hosts, the Mount Zion." And what time is this but that which is described in the preceding verses? "For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and take away and cut down the branches."

"In that time, " when it seems fit for nothing, but to be stubbed

and burnt as a useless stump. When it is fit for nobody, and apparently still less fit for God, is the present to be made to the Lord of Hosts. Then will this people, scattered and peeled, be brought by the Holy Ghost, an acceptable offering unto God, as being washed in the blood of his Son, and clothed in his spotless righteousness. And observe where they are to be brought, the spot where the offering is to be made, “to the place of the name of the Lord of Hosts, the Mount Zion.” And what is Zion, but the place “where God has commanded the blessing, even life for evermore?” Brought to Zion where Jehovah reigns in the hearts of his redeemed, and where the “blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than that of Abel.” Brought to see its solemnities, to be enriched with its treasures, and rejoice in its glory.

Thus if we are brought as a present to the Lord of Hosts, we shall come to Mount Zion—to the city of the living God, to banquet upon the Gospel feast, to eat and drink Gospel wine and milk, without money and without price. And by what road, and through what teaching? As having been pious from youth? As having been educated religiously in the Sunday School? As having said so many prayers, and having performed so many pious exercises? As having mastered our besetting sins and fiery passions? As being better than others, holier than others, more religious than others? If we come so, we come not as the text speaks. Such qualifications will not render us an acceptable gift to the Lord of Israel.

The nation that is presented to him is “scattered” upon the mountains without a Shepherd: “peeled” under the heavy weight of trials and temptations; “terrible” to themselves and to others, from the work of God in their hearts; “meted out” by the Spirit of the Lord putting a standard in their conscience, to bring all that they are and have to the test; “trodden under feet” by men, and by themselves; without a country, without a home; for “their land the rivers have spoiled.” But in this abject state of destitution, poverty, nakedness, and necessity, brought as an acceptable present to the

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Lord of Hosts—to the place where he hath recorded his name—even to Zion, where he lives and reigns, as the God of all grace.

If this is true, and who can gainsay it? If these are the works of God, and who can deny that they are? then, only, so far as we have some divine and experimental acquaintance with these things in our souls, have we any Scriptural testimony, that we are either come to, or are on our way towards Zion.

And, may I not add, if you live and die without knowing somewhat of this experience, you will never enter the gates of glory, but be among those to whom the Lord will say, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!”

39 SALVATION WORKED OUT WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING

Preached on Thursday Evening, at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London

July 6th, 1843

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” Phil. 2:12, 13

There are certain texts in the Word of God which the advocates of free will make frequent use of in order to prop up their own cause, and as weapons against the truth of God. And I believe that God, for His own wise purposes, has revealed such texts in the blessed Scripture that “He may take the wise in their own craftiness,” and that those who willfully close their eyes and stop their ears against the truth may find the Word of God to be “a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block” (Rom. 11:8, 9), that “they may fall, and be snared, and be taken” (Isa. 8:15). And thus the gospel, whilst it becomes to the elect of God a “savour of life unto life,” is made to those “who stumble at the Word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed” (1 Pet. 2:8), “a savour of

death unto death.”

The text, or rather the first clause of it, which I have just read is one of those which Arminians make great use of in the support of their cause. But I hope I shall be able to show, if the Lord enable me and give me a door of utterance, that it is full of sound gospel truth, and that it is not, as they suppose, one which favours their self-righteous scheme, but contains a sweet and experimental description of the work of God the Holy Ghost in the hearts and consciences of God’s people. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”

We find in the text mention made of “salvation,” and this “salvation” the Philippians are called upon “to work out with fear and trembling.” What salvation is this? It cannot be the everlasting salvation of the soul, for God in His Word has most plainly declared that that is already accomplished. “Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim. 1:9). And again, “By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 11:14). The Lord Himself, with expiring breath, declared, “It is finished,” and said in His last solemn prayer to His Father, “I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do” (John 17:4). It is very clear, then that the “salvation” spoken of in the text is not the salvation from the wrath to come, is not that work whereby the elect of God are redeemed from all iniquity, and will all be brought to enjoy hereafter an everlasting “weight of glory.” It is not of such salvation that the text speaks. For man cannot “work out” that; it has been already accomplished by the finished work of the Son of God. Sin has been eternally put away by the sacrifice of Christ, and there can be no adding to and no taking from that work of which Jesus Himself said, “It is finished.”

The salvation then in the text is an internal, an experimental salvation; not the salvation wrought by Christ upon the cross for

the elect, but a salvation wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of those that believe. And to this conclusion we are led by that part of our text where it is expressly said, "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

In order, then, to get at the spiritual meaning of the exhortation, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," we must connect it with the following verse—"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Thus this "working out" is only a working out of that which God works in; and, as God must work in before we can work out, I shall, with God's blessing, look a little at what is said in the second clause of the text before I enter into the meaning and suitability of the exhortation: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

It is God, then, that works in the soul "both to will and to do of His good pleasure;" nor have we any will nor have we any power, except as God is pleased to work both will and power in our souls; and this is a truth which every child of God is brought experimentally to know and feel.

I. Now when the Lord begins to work in a vessel of mercy to will and to do of His good pleasure, in order that he may work out that which God works in, He teaches him three things.

1. He works in him a sense of felt sinfulness. By displaying to the soul His holy law, by opening up the real nature of sin, and by laying guilt as a heavy burden upon the conscience, God works in every quickened soul a sense of felt sinfulness; and if a man has never had wrought in his soul by the power of God a sense of felt sinfulness, so as to open up to him something of the horrible nature of sin, and to sink him down into guilt and trouble on account of his vileness before God, he has yet to take the first step in vital godliness.

2. But with this sense of felt sinfulness, God working in the soul by the blessed Spirit, works also a sense of felt ruin. It is not merely a sense of felt sinfulness and guilt lying upon the conscience that is opened up by a sight of God's holy law, but, accompanying it,

there is a sense of felt ruin; that we are lost and undone; and that nothing but the wrath of God and the damnation of hell will be our lot, unless God Himself stretch forth His hand to save us from our justly merited doom.

3. And with this, God that “works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure,” works also a sense of felt helplessness; He teaches us not only that we are utterly ruined and undone, but also that we are completely helpless to save our own souls, and deliver them from that judgment of which we stand in dread.

Now if a man has never had God to work in him these three things—felt sinfulness, felt ruin, and felt helplessness, he can know nothing of what it is to “work out his own salvation with fear and trembling.” But wherever God works in a man “to will and to do of His good pleasure,” he begins to “work out” just in proportion as God works in. Does God, for instance, work in his soul a sense of felt sinfulness? He works out, so to speak, that sense of felt sinfulness in groans and sighs and confessions before God. Does God again work in his soul a sense of felt ruin? He works out experimentally, the Holy Ghost enabling him, this sense of felt ruin in cries and lamentations on account of his lost and ruined state. And does God work in him a sense of felt helplessness? He works out this very sense of felt helplessness by sinking down under it as a heavy burden, and complaining into the ears of the Lord how helpless and how impotent he is to think a good thought, say a good word, or perform a good action.

But the text speaks of “salvation.” Now salvation implies a being saved from those things which if we lived and died in them would be our ruin. The term “salvation,” in this experimental sense, does not mean therefore only those manifestations and revelations in which salvation as an enjoyed reality pre-eminently consists; but it includes also that whole work of God upon the conscience whereby we are saved from those things which if we continued in them would be our ruin.

For instance, before the Lord is pleased to quicken the soul, it

is walking, for the most part, either in open profanity, or else in a form of self-righteousness. Now the very feelings which I have been describing of felt sinfulness, felt ruin, and felt helplessness that God works in the soul, are all to save it from those sins in which it was buried, or from that self-righteousness in which it was wrapped up. As God, then, works this sense of felt sinfulness, felt ruin, and felt helplessness in the conscience, the living soul works out, so to speak, of those things in which it was buried. If it were open sin, it works out of and away from those daring iniquities in which it was wallowing; if it were Pharisaism, it works out of that self-righteousness in which it was wrapped up; and if, as it occurs in some cases, it had a name to live while it was dead, if there was a form of godliness whilst it denied the power, as God works condemnation in the conscience, it works out of that empty profession of religion, and comes out of that mask into the scrutiny and under the heart-searching eye of God as a consuming fire.

II. But this branch of internal salvation having been effectually wrought in, and experimentally wrought out, another branch follows—that, in fact, in which salvation chiefly consists. As the Lord, then, works in the soul “to will and to do of His good pleasure,” He works in the heart light, “whereby we see light in God’s light.” He that “teacheth to profit” casts a secret light into the heart, and in that light we see “the truth as it is in Jesus.” A sacred light shines upon the page of God’s truth; and that sacred light is reflected, as it were, out of the page of God’s truth into the heart. And that is the first time we have any knowledge of the way of salvation, the first glimpse that the soul gets that there can be any escape from the wrath to come.

When light, then, is thus cast into the soul by the operation of the Spirit through the Word of God, it sees that there is a Jesus at God’s right hand, a divine Mediator betwixt God and man. In the beams of this heavenly light the soul sees that the Son of God has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and that those who stand interested in His finished work stand complete in Him.

Now as this is opened up to the soul, God working in it to will to be saved in this blessed way, and working in it also power to receive the truth in the love of it, as God thus works in the soul to will and to do, it begins to "work out" that which God works in. Does the Lord, then, work light in the soul, in order that heavenly light may be an experimental salvation from darkness? The soul, thus enlightened, works out toward that light which it dimly describes. As a man in a mine, who has lost his way, and sees some beams of the sun shining at the door of the mine, works his way towards the light which he sees, because he knows that that is the only way of escape; so when the Spirit of God works in the soul a divine light, it works onward and upward towards that light which it sees as its only door of escape from darkness that is felt.

But with this light He also works faith in the heart whereby it receives the truth as it is in Jesus. The Holy Ghost holds up before the eyes a crucified Christ, and bringing the savour of His name like the ointment poured forth into the heart, enables it to believe in Him unto life eternal. And as this faith is wrought in, the soul exercises it, and thus works out this branch of salvation, and works with it upon its Author and Finisher.

III. And this leads us on to see a little what the Holy Ghost means by the expression, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." How are "fear and trembling" connected with this experimental working out of salvation? They are connected with it in this way. The "fear" which the apostle speaks of here is that "fear of the Lord," which is "the beginning of wisdom," that "fountain of life" which causes a man "to depart from the snares of death." Now as God works in the soul "to will and to do of His good pleasure," everything that He does for it is weighed up in the conscience by this fear which is implanted by God. And as it is weighed up by this godly fear, the soul, in working out its own salvation, works it out "with fear;" that is, everything that God does for the soul is so weighed up in the balances of a tender conscience, and is so examined, step by step, by the light of godly fear,

that the salvation itself is thus worked out “with fear,” fear being that which ever accompanies God’s work in the conscience.

1. For instance, does God work in the soul a sense of felt sinfulness? The soul working out this feeling which God has worked in works it out with fear. “Is it,” says the soul, “the real teaching of God that I am now experiencing? Does this guilt which is upon my conscience come from God’s hand in my heart? Do the convictions under which I labour proceed from the Lord? Do the tears that flow down my cheek spring from a really broken heart? Do the sobs that heave from my bosom proceed from this circumstance, that God has touched my conscience with His finger? Or is it the sorrow of the world that worketh death? Is it the remorse of Judas? Is it the repentance of Ahab? Is it the tears of Esau?” And thus, as the soul is conscious under these teachings that sin lies as a weight and a burden, it still works out that which God works in with godly fear, lest upon this point it be deceived. So again with respect to the sense of felt ruin. A man under the teachings of the Spirit knows that he is utterly lost unless God is pleased to save him. But then it comes to this point in a tender conscience—“Is it of God? Do my feelings proceed from Him? Is it His own hand that works this sense of ruin and misery in my conscience? Or are my eyes only naturally opened? Is my conscience merely naturally wrought upon? Are these fears such as reprobates are exercised with? May I not have all this, and sink into hell at last?” And thus a sense of self-ruin is worked out with godly fear, and examined whether it proceed from the teaching of God in the soul, or whether it be the mere offspring of nature. And so with respect to felt helplessness. The soul, under these divine teachings, knows that it is utterly helpless to save itself from the wrath to come. It hears from the pulpit, from the mouths of experimental ministers, that all God’s children feel their helplessness. But then the question arises, “Does my felt helplessness spring from divine teachings, or have I learnt it as a doctrine from the mouth of man? Have I got it from books, have I gathered it from ministers, or does it spring from the real

work of the Spirit?” And thus this sense of felt helplessness, which is a part of salvation, is worked out in the soul with fear.

2. So also, with respect to divine light. The soul has seen light in God’s light, and a blessed ray has been shed at times on the page of God’s Word. The complete atonement which Jesus has made by the offering of His blood, and the perfection of His righteousness have been reflected into the heart and the conscience, so as to melt the soul with a sense of mercy. But then there comes the working out of this salvation which God works in; and the soul, under the sensations of godly fear and trembling awe, begins to look at this light which has come into the heart; and it speaks in this way: “There is such a thing as walking in the light of one’s own fire. Is mine that light? There is such a thing as having light without life. Is mine of that kind? There is such a thing as the barren moonlight of speculation, a knowledge of the doctrines, and a wayside hearer’s joy in them. Am I under that delusion?” Thus the very light which God Himself gives is worked out with fear; the summoning it up, and bringing it under God’s own heart-searching eye, that it may know whether it come from Him, or be merely a delusion of nature.

3. And so when the Lord gives faith in Christ, and brings into the soul a sense of His dying love, atoning blood, finished work, and justifying righteousness, there is still this question arising from time to time in the heart—especially after the first sweetness has gone away, and the first enjoyment passed off from the soul (and this is working out salvation with fear and trembling): “Are these feelings from God? Is my faith the faith of God’s elect? How does it differ from the presumption of hypocrites? Does it stand in the wisdom of man, or does it stand in the power of God? Am I am sure that this faith which I have felt in times past was God’s work in my conscience? Am I sure that it came from God Himself into my heart?” And thus this very faith, which is a branch of salvation, is worked out with fear lest the soul be deceived in this important matter.

4. So also if God has ever heard our prayers, if we have gone to Him in deep soul trouble, and the Lord has answered our petitions, and so have at the time been certain that the answer came from God—(and this is also a branch of salvation), yet often afterwards the soul is brought to ask, “Did it come from God? Am I certain that I prayed in the Spirit? Am I quite sure it was an answer from God Himself?” It is worked out with fear lest the soul be deceived in this matter, or lest God have merely answered the prayer as a God of providence, and not as a God of grace.

5. And thus with respect to every testimony that the child of God receives, every manifestation with which he is favoured, every promise applied to his heart with power, every season of hearing the word with sweetness, every time that the Lord blesses his soul and makes it to be a watered garden, sooner or later he is brought to work out all this with fear, lest it be only a delusion of the flesh, not the genuine work and witness of God the Holy Ghost in his heart.

IV. But besides this “fear,” we read also of “trembling.” Now what is this “trembling?” I believe it to be what we read of in Hebrews 12:28: “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” It is the trembling Moses felt when he said, “I exceedingly fear and quake;” which Isaiah experienced when he cried out, “Woe is me, for I am undone;” which Daniel knew when his “comeliness was turned into corruption.” This is a holy trembling, not the trembling of a slave, but the reverence of a son; not the trembling that proceeds from manifested wrath, but the trembling that proceeds from a sense of God’s majesty and holiness.

The soul then that works out its own salvation with “trembling,” works it out as in the immediate presence of God, as penetrated with a holy reverence of His great majesty, and as brought under the all-seeing eye of Jehovah Himself. But O, how few there are who are brought to bring their religion day by day, and sometimes hour by hour, before God Himself! How easy it is for a man

to take up his religion without any sense of God's heart-searching eye! and how few there are who know what it is to cry unto God to make their heart right before Him, and, like Hezekiah in the temple, to be daily spreading before the Lord the secrets of their heart.

O, if men were taught of the Spirit to bring their religion more before God and less before man, we should have much less profession and much more possession, and those who are really born of God would shine forth more conspicuously as the saints of the Most High.

The soul then works out its salvation, not merely "with fear" lest it should be deceived, but also with "trembling" or holy reverence, as in the immediate presence of God, knowing that no self-deception can stand before Him. It is deeply conscious that no hypocrisy, no presumption, no self-righteousness, no self-delusion can ever abide one look of His eye, or one touch of His finger. And thus it is brought to work out its salvation "with trembling," knowing that God will not be mocked.

V. And this leads us to examine more closely the expression, "work out." How is a vessel of mercy to "work out his own salvation?" It is not by what are called "good works" that this salvation is wrought out. The Holy Ghost is not speaking of good works here; He is speaking of salvation; and that an experimental, internal salvation. How then is this working carried on? It is carried on by bringing, so to speak, into exercise that which God works in the conscience. Does God, for instance, work in the soul faith? Then faith works out as God works it in. Does faith in its first actings lay hold of God's justice in a holy law? Then there is a working out of this faith in the law, when the soul fears and trembles before God. And does God work faith in Christ? This faith which God works in works out upon Christ's blood and righteousness. Does God work a good hope through grace that it may be an anchor sure and steadfast within the veil? The soul works out, and works with this hope as God communicates it. And does God in any measure work love in the heart? There is a working out of that

love as God works it in; a going up to Him who gives it, a flowing forth in that very channel whence it came in.

This is the way that the Lord teaches His people, and works living feelings into living consciences; and when they are wrought there they do not lie in the soul as stones in the street, dead and motionless. They are not so much inert matter, but they are pregnant with life and warmth, sense and motion, and ebb and flow as the Spirit moves upon them. It is so even naturally. If we have any feelings naturally, those feelings will work out. Are we afflicted naturally in our minds? There will be some working out of that affliction. Do we rejoice in the success of some plan? There will be some working out of that joy; there will be some telling of it to a friend, some emotions of countenance, some joyous expressions whereby that feeling which is within us is worked out. So it is in religion. If God works trouble in a man's soul, he will work out that trouble by complaining of it to God. If God works prayer in a man's heart, he will work out that prayer by pouring it into the ears of the Most High. If God works reproof and rebuke, so that His frowns are sensibly felt and feared, there will be a working out of that reproof and rebuke by honest confession and acknowledgment of sin. Does God work brokenness of heart, contrition, and godly sorrow? There will be the working of it out in secret tears. Does He display His goodness and mercy? There will be the working out of praise by its freely flowing out of the heart as God works it in. Does He work in the soul any faith in Jesus? There is a flowing forth of this faith toward Him and upon Him. Does He work in the soul any love towards the Lord? There is a flowing forth unto, and a working out of this love upon His Person, blood, and righteousness. And does He work in the soul to love His children, does He lay them on our heart, and give us a sweet union and knitting to them? There is a working out of this, not merely in those acts of kindness which we may do them, but also in the secret flowing forth of affection to them when they are not present with us.

VI. Now to know something of this heart and conscience work,

is to work out our own salvation; and it is in his experimental working out of this that a man is brought to know what salvation is. It is indeed most true that God's people are saved eternally by Christ's finished work, and it is most certain that we cannot contribute one jot or tittle to our own salvation. But when we come to the reception of this salvation into the heart in all its blessed richness, divine efficacy, and heavenly fruits; when we come to salvation as a thing experimentally wrought out in the conscience, and lodged by the hand of God in the soul, then this working of it out comes into exercise; and no man ever knew anything of an internal work of God upon his conscience who was not more or less acquainted with the working out of that salvation which God worked in. It is in this that the real experimental teaching of God in the conscience differs from a dead profession. An empty, dead profession rests upon the letter of truth. It receives certain doctrines revealed in God's Word, and those doctrines it receives, not in the power of them, not in the experience of them, but simply as they are in the letter of the Word. There is in it no working in by God "to will and to do of His good pleasure," and therefore there is no working out of salvation as an experimental reality. None but God's people under the teachings of the Spirit know what it is thus to "work out their own salvation." And all who work out their own salvation will work it out "with fear and trembling." For when a man is taught by God to know what he is; when he feels what a deceitful heart he carries in his bosom; when the various snares, temptations, and corruptions by which he is daily encompassed are opened up to him; when he knows and feels what a ruined wretch he is in self, then he begins to fear and tremble lest he should be damned at the last. He cannot go recklessly and carelessly on without "making straight paths for his feet," without "examining himself whether he be in the faith." A child of God cannot run heedlessly and thoughtlessly on without "proving his own work," without examining whether God is dealing with his conscience or not. And whenever a man's dreadfully deceitful

heart is opened up to him; whenever the hollowness of an empty profession is unmasked; whenever he sees hundreds and thousands having a name to live while they are dead; whenever he feels how strait is the path, and how narrow is the way, and how few there are that find it; whenever he is brought to see how easily a man is deceived, and how certainly he must be deceived unless God teach him in a special manner;—whenever a man is brought to this point, to see what a rare thing, what a sacred thing, and what a spiritual thing religion is, that God Himself is the Author and Finisher of it in the conscience, and that a man has no more religion than God is pleased to give him, and cannot work a single grain of it in his own soul; when a man stands on this solemn ground, and begins to work out that which God works in, it will always be “with fear and trembling;” it will always be with some “fear” lest he be deceived, until God assures him by His own blessed lips that he is not deluded; and it will always be “with trembling,” as knowing that he stands in the immediate presence of God, and under His heart-searching eye.

Now when a man works in this way, and gets at salvation by this path, he gets at it in a way that no man can dispute him out of. When God has worked in a man “to will,” and not only worked in him “to will,” but also worked in him “to do;” when He has made him willing to flee from the wrath to come; willing to be saved by the atoning blood and justifying righteousness of Jesus; willing to be saved by sovereign grace as a sinner undone without hope, and glad to be saved in whatever way God is pleased to save him; willing to pass through the fire, willing to undergo affliction, willing to walk in the strait and narrow path, willing to take up the cross and follow Jesus, willing to bear all the troubles which may come upon him, willing to endure all the slanders which may be heaped upon his name; willing to be what God makes him, and willing to have what God gives him; when God has made him willing to be nothing, and to have nothing but as God makes him the one, and gives him the other: and besides working in him “to will,” has worked

in him “to do,” worked in him faith to believe, hope whereby he anchors in the finished work of Christ, and love whereby he cleaves to Him with purpose of heart; when all this has been “with fear and trembling,” not rushing heedlessly on in daring presumption, not buoyed up by the good opinion of others, not running down the stream of popularity, not taking up his religion from ministers and books, but by a real, genuine work of the Holy Ghost in the conscience; I say, when he has thus worked out with fear and trembling what God has worked in, he has got at salvation; at salvation from wrath to come; at salvation from the power of sin; at salvation from an empty profession; at salvation from a form of godliness; at salvation from the flesh, from the delusions of Satan, from the blindness and ignorance of his own heart; he has got at a salvation which is God’s salvation, because God has worked in him to will and to do of His good pleasure.

VII. And this last expression shows us that we cannot chalk out any particular path, because though God works in all His people to will, and though He works in all His people to do, yet still it is “of His good pleasure.” Some for instance are a longer and some a shorter time in finding the way; some sink very far into convictions, and others do not go so deep into soul trouble; some are more favoured with blessed manifestations of Jesus, and others have them faint and feeble. We poor dependent creatures can only work out just as God works in. But He will so work in all “to will,” and He will so work in all “to do,” that they shall all work out their own salvation, and they shall all work it out with fear and trembling. And they will find their fear and trembling to be the most blessed helpers that God could give them in this work; for they become afterwards established in the “truth as it is in Jesus,” just in proportion to their fear, and just in proportion to their trembling.

Now if this be the case; if this be a description, a feeble description I admit, of the way in which a soul is taught of God, what are we to say of people who learn their religion, without this process being carried on in their souls? Can we believe that they know

anything experimentally of the matter who have never known anything of this work in their consciences? Thus, in God's mysterious ways, those who may think themselves perfectly right and have no doubt nor fear upon the subject, may find themselves one day perfectly wrong; and those who are exercised with doubts and fears, burdens, temptations, and sorrows, and all these things have made their consciences tender, and have brought them more into the light and life of God's guiding Spirit, will find that though they have walked in a dark, a trying and mysterious path, it has been to them a safe and a blessed path, and at last they will "receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls."

40 GRACE SUPER ABOUNDING OVER THE ABOUNDINGS OF SIN

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning,

July 9, 1843

"But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 5:20, 21

The origin of evil has puzzled and baffled the acutest minds that ever existed; and no doubt it will continue to perplex and baffle the mind of man as long as the world shall endure. How evil in the first instance originated, and why God permitted it to arise in his fair creation, are mysteries unfathomable to man's finite understanding. It is of no use, therefore, for those who fear God to attempt to dive into these unfathomable mysteries, but to leave them as they stand, insoluble by creature intellect. It is sufficient for those that fear God, to know these three things respecting evil.—First, that "sin hath entered into the world;" and that we, as connected with our first parents, are involved in it. Secondly, that for those who

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spiritually know and experimentally groan under sin, as opened up in their consciences by the Spirit of God, there is a remedy, an all-sufficient remedy, in the mediation of God's dear Son. And thirdly, that all evil will be eventually overruled for the good of the church, and for Jehovah's eternal glory.

In the latter part of this chapter, the Apostle has drawn a parallel betwixt our standing in our first covenant head, and our standing in our second covenant head; and he shows the miseries that result from the one, and the blessings that flow from the other. But in exhibiting this parallel, and in drawing out this comparison, he shows how much more the benefits that spring from our union with our second covenant head overtop and surpass the miseries that flow from our union with our first covenant head; and, in fact, sums up the whole comparison in the words of the text, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

The parallel, at which I have hinted, is summed up then in the text; and we find, that there are mentioned in it three leading points as to our connection with our first covenant head, and three corresponding leading points as to our connection with our second covenant head; and that these are set over against each other. The abounding of sin—the reign of sin—and death, as the consequence of that reign, are the three leading miseries which result from our union with our first covenant head. The superaboundings of grace over sin—the reign of grace—and the eventual triumphs of grace in bringing its subjects unto eternal life, are the three leading mercies on the other side, which we derive from our connection with our second covenant head.

The subject then divides itself into two leading branches.

I.—What we derive, in the way of misery, from our union with Adam.

II.—What we derive, in the way of mercy, from our union with Christ.

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We will look, with God's blessing, at these two branches in their order.

I.—The first misery, which our connection with Adam has entailed upon us, is, The reign of sin; for though it is not put down in the text as the first point, yet I find it more convenient to treat of it before the two others.

1. The reign of sin. Sin is represented by this expression as a mighty Conqueror, triumphing over all men, and prostrating the whole human race under his universal dominion. And do we not find wherever we go that such is the case? Sin, like a mighty conqueror, exercises sovereign authority over all men, from the palace to the cottage, from the throne to the dunghill. It not only exists, but it reigns in the mind of man; and exercises supreme authority over their thoughts, words, and ways, compelling them to yield implicit submission to all its dictates.

But when do we come experimentally to know this painful truth? We come to know it, for the first time, when we come to know what sin is. And when do we come to know what sin is? We never know the real nature of sin, until it is opened up in our conscience by the Spirit of God. In the light of a broken law, and in the manifestation of God's holiness to the conscience, we learn for the first time that we are sinners before him. Now, when the Lord teaches a man that he is a sinner, he implants in him a nature which is holy as God is holy, and pure as God is pure; and therefore we are said (2 Peter 1:4) to be "partakers of the divine nature," that is, of that which is communicable of the divine nature. Now, no sooner is this "divine nature" implanted in a man's soul, than it draws forth the tyranny of sin. As long as the man was dead in sin, there was no opposition to this mighty Tyrant: all his commands were implicitly obeyed, and no resistance was offered to his will; he eagerly fulfilled the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and whatever sin bade him do, that he did gladly and cheerfully. But no sooner is the fear of God planted in the soul, a sense of sin felt in the conscience, and a manifestation of God's holiness brought

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with divine light and life into the heart, than the vessel of mercy begins to resist and struggle, and tries to withdraw his neck out of the yoke, which this arbitrary tyrant had fastened on him. But just in the same way as naturally, when subjects begin to rebel, the oppressor begins to multiply his terrors, and shew forth his power; so no sooner do we begin, in the fear of God, and under the workings of God's Spirit, to withdraw our necks out of this yoke, than sin, like a mighty tyrant, begins to shew forth all his hideous strength. We may raise about us what bulwarks we please; entrench ourselves with vows, promises, and resolutions; but sin, like a mighty tyrant, while the soul is under the law, batters down all its defences: for the law gives strength unto sin, according to the Apostle's words, "the strength of sin is the law." So that the more the soul tries, while under the law, to resist sin and oppose it, the more does sin exercise its tyrannical authority to beat and batter down every bulwark and every opposition, with which we may try to resist it. Thus, then, commences a conflict, in which we are sure to be worsted, for it is God's purpose that we should be overthrown; it is his design that sin should prevail over us, and kill us outright; in order that when we are slaughtered outright by this tyrant sin, the Lord may pick us up by sovereign grace, and show us that as sin hath reigned over us, even so must grace reign. The Apostle therefore adds, "unto death," which is the second fruit of our union with Adam.

2. Sin is represented by this expression, not merely as a mighty monarch, who holds his subjects in implicit submission, but as carrying a sword, whereby he executes vengeance upon all rebels. He "reigns unto death." Sin reigns in the world unto death. Whence comes temporal death, but through sin? Whence spiritual death, but through sin? And whence eternal death, but through sin? Sin, therefore, reigns in the world unto death—temporal, spiritual, and eternal. But in the conscience also, when the power of sin is made known, it "reigns unto death;" that is, death takes place in a man's conscience, and he is brought down into the dust

of death, without help, hope, or strength.

In this reign unto death, all God's people are, more or less, exercised; and until they are led by divine teaching into the mysteries of grace, it is a subject that always has and always will puzzle them. They are baffled, that do what they will, sin should still overcome them; that let them vow, promise, resolve, sin still masters them, and overpowers all their vows, promises, and resolutions. This is what baffles God's people. When they are trying to be holy, to serve God, to pray to him, and worship him acceptably, sin still keeps working in their carnal minds, bringing forth fruit unto death; and thus continually casts them down, and breaks through all their oppositions, all their strength, and all their resolutions against it.

3. But there is another word added, which is, "the abounding of sin." What is the figure implied here? That sin is not merely a tyrant reigning unto death, but that it abounds and overflows; like a mighty river, which floods its banks; or, like a common sewer, choked up with filth, which finds its way through, and oozes out through every crack and crevice. So sin abounds and overflows, and makes itself manifest in every thing a man thinks, says, or does. No place is free from the intrusion of sin; not the pulpit, nor the pew, nor the Lord's table. We cannot get into the most secret retirement, but sin will be present. It will intrude itself, more or less, and abound continually, thrusting its hateful face into those seasons and moments, when a man would fain be most free from it; and when, if he could, he would have none but God alone to fill his heart. The aboundings of sin every vessel of mercy must experimentally learn and know for himself; and a most distressing thing it is for a man to learn experimentally, whose conscience is made tender, whose heart is touched by God's Spirit, and who desires to serve him acceptably, in "reverence and godly fear."

II.—But we pass on to consider these three points of comparison and parallel, which the Apostle has brought forward, to show that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

1. He speaks, then, of the reign of grace as opposed to the reign

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of sin. Does sin reign? Does it exercise arbitrary authority? Is it represented as a mighty monarch, slaughtering his thousands and his millions? Grace comes forth a mightier monarch, as reigning over the soul in opposition to, and to the deposition of this tyrant that rules in the carnal mind. And what is grace? Grace is the free favour and undeserved mercy of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, the love which the Three-one God bears to the elect family. Thus grace has special objects on which it is fixed; and it is determined to bring those special objects into the enjoyment of that love which has been eternally fixed upon them. Thus, we can only understand the reign of grace as we understand experimentally the reign of sin; and until we have felt the iron enter into our souls, and known the galling fetters that sin, the mighty tyrant, lays on us, we never can know anything experimentally, nor rejoice in the feeling of our being delivered from this yoke by the interposition of the mightier monarch Grace. Grace then reigned in the bosom of the triune God before the foundation of the world; there it had its origin, there it began to reign. And grace reigned in the eternal Covenant, which was entered into betwixt the Three Persons of the Godhead, on behalf of the elect family. Grace reigned also in the incarnation of the Son of God, in the mediation of Jesus, in all his actings, in all his sufferings, in his cross, in his grave, in his resurrection, in his ascension, and in his present intercession at God's right hand.

But, as we have endeavoured to trace experimentally the reign of sin, so we will endeavour to trace also experimentally the reign of grace. As we know no more of sin than as it is opened up in our hearts, and laid upon our conscience; so we know no more of grace than as we are brought into a feeling and spiritual enjoyment of it. Thus, until we have been actually slaughtered by sin, until we have groaned beneath the yoke of this mighty monarch, until we have put up hundreds of cries and thousands of petitions to God to deliver us from it, until we have learned to abhor the exercise of this hateful tyrant's authority over us, and have cried unto the

Lord from the depth of a broken heart to deliver us from being tyrannized over, we know nothing experimentally of the reign of grace. Now sin is opened up in the conscience of the child of God in all its minute and secret workings: it is not merely open actions, such as the world calls sin, that are laid upon the conscience of a living man; but sin, in all its secret workings, and minute actings, is opened up in his soul by the Spirit of God, and a solemn sentence of condemnation passed on it. Under this inward sense of sin, the child of God groans; he sees and feels his presumption, hypocrisy, and self-righteousness; his enmity, blasphemy, rebelliousness, fretfulness, impatience, peevishness, and evil thoughts against a holy and a good God. And as all these secret evils work in the heart of the child of God, he groans experimentally under them, and desires to be delivered from their dominion. He wants not so much the deliverance from outward sins, from which God in a great measure keeps him, as a deliverance from the inward tyranny which sin exercises over him. Thus grace begins experimentally to reign; and it is known, in the first instance, by the opposition that it makes to sin in its inward and minute workings.

The Apostle, speaking of sin, classes it under two leading heads, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness, of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. 7:1.) He divides sin into two leading branches: the filth of the flesh, and the filth of the spirit; that is, into sins which we may call carnal sins, and into sins which we call spiritual sins; carnal sins, consisting in the workings of the flesh towards the objects of the flesh; and spiritual sin: enmity, infidelity, rebellion, peevishness, and fretfulness against a good and a holy God. Thus, as sin reigns in these two distinct channels, so grace begins also to reign by checking sin in these two distinct channels. Is the heart, then, going after evil? Does the eye lust after forbidden things? Is the carnal mind panting after the world and worldly objects; and does sin seek thus to reign in the flesh? Grace begins a secret opposition to these carnal workings, by showing how hate-

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ful they are in the sight of a holy God, bringing the soul to a real honest confession of them, enabling it to cast its burden upon the Lord, and pleading with him that he would prevent it being overcome by them, and supply secret strength, that it may not be entangled and cast down. So with respect to “the filth of the spirit;” the secret enmity, rebellion, obscenity, blasphemy, and rebelliousness that the soul feels against God and godliness; grace reigns by making these things hateful, and raising up in the heart sighs, groans, and earnest petitions, that they might not break forth, but that God, by his blessed Spirit, would check them and keep them under. But as sin has reigned, so grace must much more reign. Sin, though it may long exercise its authority over us, yet meets at length with a conqueror mightier than it. Grace therefore reigns in the pardoning of those sins which the soul groans and grieves under, in healing those backslidings which it is continually committing, and covering with a robe of righteousness the continual iniquities which burst forth from the depths of the carnal mind. Thus grace is especially manifested, not merely in checking the hidden evils of the heart, but in pardoning them, blotting them out, covering and hiding them from the face of offended justice, and casting them into the depths of the sea, where when sought for they shall no more be found.

2. But the reign of sin was “unto death.” Therefore, in order to find a parallel, grace must reign “unto eternal life.” It was the object of the mighty tyrant Sin to kill eternally all his subjects. This haughty despot is represented as trampling down all his subjects into an ever-enduring hell. But grace, as an almighty monarch of mercy and love, steps forth, so to speak, from the bosom of God, meets the arbitrary tyrant, checks him in the career of victory, and plucks the objects of eternal mercy from his cruel hands. Therefore, to meet and check him, grace must meet him on those points where he chiefly reigns. Does sin reign, for instance, in trampling down his subjects into temporal death? Grace meets him in this reign, by taking away the sting of death, which is sin, and here-

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after raising up the bodies of those who “fall asleep in Jesus,” to eternal life. Did sin again reign, in spiritually killing, in utterly paralyzing every faculty, so as to make men “dead in trespasses and sins?” Grace reigns in quickening elect souls, and breathing the life of God into them. Does sin reign in trampling down its subjects into an eternity of misery? Grace reigns against the mighty tyrant, by raising the soul up to enjoy eternal life in Christ!

Thus, grace reigns not merely in opposition to sin, but so as to undo all that sin has done, and to counteract every thing which it has brought about. It thus completes its victories, and triumphs over all the miseries and evils which sin has caused, leading captivity captive. And here is its sweetness and blessedness, here is its triumphant and omnipotent character, that it does not merely counteract sin in all its workings, but triumphs over it; it not merely meets it half way, and fights it on equal terms; not merely resists it, and by resisting checks it—it does more, for it completely overthrows it, and rescues the happy objects of God’s mercy from all the miseries and all the wretchedness which sin has brought about and brought into their souls. And this is known experimentally, when grace brings the sweet enjoyment of this divine truth into the soul, and when the blessed Spirit is pleased to lead it into a knowledge of what grace is, and persuades it of its interest in what grace has done, and what grace is still doing.

3. But the third point of comparison of which the Apostle speaks, is, the superabounding of grace over the abounding of sin, “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Does sin abound? Is it not continually flooding our hearts, and oozing up in filthy streams every hour? Can we live a moment without the aboundings of sin? Do we speak? Sin is there. Are we silent? Sin is there. Do we hide ourselves from the world? Sin still intrudes itself. Do we go into business? There sin is still our companion. Go where we will, do what we will, still, more or less, there is the abounding of sin in the carnal mind; and O! the many sighs, groans, and tears which God’s people are obliged to pour out on account of the

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abounding of sin in their wretched, wretched hearts. But “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” If grace merely abounded, and did not “much more abound,” it would be, so to speak, like a drawn battle, like a conflict between two mighty warriors, both departing from the field claiming the victory. But grace “much more abounds;” it comes off a triumphant conqueror: it does not merely meet sin half way, and then retire from the contest; but “where sin abounded,” grace, rich, matchless grace, “much more abounds,” overtopping, overflowing, and superabounding over all the heights and depths of sin. For instance, is our heart (and do we not feel it to be so?) the receptacle for everything base and vile? A cage of every unclean bird? Is our imagination polluted? Is our eye continually lusting after forbidden things? Is our heart continually “hewing out cisterns, broken cisterns, that hold no water?” Is every thing that is base and filthy, every thing that is blasphemous and obscene, to be found in our carnal mind—working death, guilt, and condemnation in the conscience? Do what we will, do we still feel the horrid overflowings and aboundings of sin? Is all that we do to keep it down, like casting a dam over a mighty river, that makes the stream flow higher and higher, until it carries away the dam itself upon its rushing waters? Does sin then abound daily and hourly, in every thought and word, in every look, in every imagination, in every thing that we do, and every thing that we are engaged in? Sure I am, if we know our own hearts, we shall find sin abounding in every word, thought, and action. Now, if grace did not “much more abound,” we might be left under the guilt and power of sin; but “where sin abounded,” grace steps in, and “much more abounds.” However high the tide of sin may rise, the tide of grace rises higher; however sin may overflow the carnal mind, sin is, with all its oozing filth, washed away “by the fountain once opened for sin and uncleanness,” which rises high above the highest tides of sin, and washes white the blackest soul that has an interest in Christ’s finished work. If it were not so, God’s people must sink and utterly perish; if they did not at times feel the super-

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aboundings of grace overtopping and overflowing the aboundings of sin, they must sink, utterly sink, in the deep waters.

Now, where sin abounds, it brings guilt into the conscience. A man cannot feel the workings of sin in him, without feeling guilt laid upon his soul, if his conscience is tender in God's fear; and thus, day by day, and sometimes hour by hour, as sin works, guilt works also. Is your eye caught by forbidden objects? Is there an adulterous look, an idolatrous desire? Guilt follows. Has an envious, revengeful thought been indulged? Guilt follows, in a greater or less degree, where the conscience is tender. Is there some rebellious, blasphemous, presumptuous rising against God? Guilt lays hold of the conscience, whenever grace has effectually laid hold of it. Is there some secret plan to exalt or raise ourselves, at the expense of another? Where the heart is tender, guilt arrests it immediately. Is there some rash and hasty word spoken in the heat of temper—some unkind expression levelled at a brother—some malicious pleasure in relating his faults? Guilt instantaneously follows, in a tender conscience. It is thus, by the workings of guilt, that we know the aboundings of sin. Men for the most part are ignorant of the inward workings of sin; but not those whose hearts are tender by God's work upon there. Often sin falls heavily on the conscience of the child of God; he does not think it a matter of little consequence, like some who stand high in a profession, but whose hearts are as hard as the nether millstone. But where the conscience is tender in God's fear, what are called little sins will often be a heavy burden upon the soul. Therefore, as sin abounds, guilt abounds; and as sin abounds sometimes every hour, guilt will sometimes abound every hour. The more that the abounding of sin is felt in its hideous character before a heart-searching Jehovah; the more minutely that the heart is watched, the more clearly shall we see the inward workings of what is contrary to God and godliness; and the more we see of the abounding, the oozing, and the working up of sin from the depths of the carnal mind, the more will guilt and shame take possession of the soul; and in this way

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are opened up the superaboundings of grace over these wretched evils. The more a man knows of the mysteries of sin, the more will he know of the mystery of grace: the more experimental insight he has into the depths of the fall, the deeper acquaintance will he eventually have of the riches of sovereign grace. In order, therefore, to pluck up these blessed pearls from the bottom of the great deep, we must go down experimentally into the depths of our fallen nature; we must sink, more or less, into this unfathomable abyss, to find the pearl of great price at the bottom. To talk, therefore, of the superaboundings of grace, and know nothing of the aboundings of sin; to have grace on our lips, and never have felt guilt on the conscience; to boast of what Christ has done for sinners, and know nothing of the depth of our own fall, and the horrible devilism of our own fallen nature—is but talking of things at a distance, and not speaking of things we experimentally feel and know.

But where sin has really abounded in a man's heart, and has been opened up to him by the Spirit of God, he stands as a sinner before the eyes of him with whom he has to do. He finds abounding in his heart every thing that is hateful and loathsome in the sight of a pure and a holy God. This makes him want to know something of the superaboundings of grace. And he finds to his soul's joy, that grace "much more abounds;" and that there is no depth to which there is not a corresponding height, that there can be no abounding of sin without a corresponding superabounding of grace; and O! how this exalts the sovereign grace of God, to find that grace can and does overtop those horrible, unceasing, repeated, and aggravated iniquities, which are daily and hourly flowing out of a polluted heart.

But again. Grace also superabounds in delivering the soul from the power of sin, "sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." When grace pardons sin, grace also delivers from the dominion of sin. And how does grace deliver from the dominion of sin? By communicating

a secret power, whereby the man is no longer the slave of his lusts and passions, and sin no longer has power to domineer over him. God never suffers his people to live and die under the power of sin; he will deliver them sooner or later from the power of evil. It is true, he always finds sin and guilt in them, and they always groan, grieve, and cry unto God on account of the aboundings of sin. But God will not suffer them to live and die under its dominion. He will deliver them from the dominion of pride, presumption, hypocrisy, and carnality. He will not suffer them to live in anything which is contrary to his holy word, but by making their consciences tender in his fear, he will “keep them from evil, that it may not grieve them.”

But it is added, “through righteousness unto eternal life.” It is all “through righteousness;” for it all flows through Christ’s righteousness. Justice has been satisfied, therefore grace may now superabound, which, unless there were this “righteousness,” it could not do. God does not pardon sin, and heal backslidings, as an indulgent parent winks at the faults and follies of his children. God indeed pardons sin and heals backslidings, but it is still “through righteousness,” in consequence of the satisfaction which his dear Son has paid to justice. Satisfaction therefore, having been paid to justice, by the sacrifice of the Son of God, iniquity is blotted out, and sin put away. Grace now freely flows to the objects of mercy; and it is in this way only that grace enters into a man’s soul. It flows to him through the channel of the Mediator’s death, through a crucified Christ. When grace, therefore, comes into the believer’s soul, through the righteousness which is in Jesus Christ, he sees that it flows through the channels of the Saviour’s agonies, groans, sweat, death, and blood. Thus, he not only finds that grace superabounds over the aboundings of sin, but that it flows through the sufferings of Christ, and comes through the blood of the Mediator: and that grace could never have so superabounded over the aboundings of sin, unless it had flowed through the meritorious sufferings of the Son of God. It therefore exalts grace in his eyes, that it should have

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come into his heart through this channel; it makes him see the hideousness of sin that requires such a sacrifice; it opens up the depth of the fall to see that he could only be delivered by having such a substitute; it reveals the wondrous mercy of God, that he did not spare his only begotten Son, but that he gave him up freely that he might bleed and die, in order that "grace might reign through righteousness," and that grace might superabound over the aboundings of sin, to pluck its favoured objects from the depth of the fall.

But it reigns, not only "through righteousness," but "unto eternal life." It lands safe in glory all its favoured objects: whatever darkness befalls them, whatever temptations they may be labouring under, whatever difficulties trouble them, whatever burdens may oppress them; however vast the reign of sin over them, and the abounding of sin in them, grace will reign and superabound unto eternal life: it will not leave them in the conflict, neither let them die in the battle; but it will bring them off more than conquerors through him that hath loved them.

In order, then, to get at these precious blessings, to know what grace is in its reign over sin, and in its superaboundings over the aboundings of iniquity, we must be led experimentally into the depths of the fall. We must be led by God himself into the secrets of our own heart; we must be brought down into distress of mind on account of our sin, and the idolatry of our fallen nature. And when, do what we will, sin will still work, reign, and abound, and we are brought to soul-poverty, helplessness, destitution, and misery,—and cast ourselves down at the footstool of his mercy—then we begin to see and feel the reign of grace, in quickening our souls, in delivering us from the wrath to come, and in preserving us from the dominion of evil. We begin to see then that grace superabounds over all the aboundings of sin in our evil hearts, and as it flows through the channel of the Saviour's sufferings, that it will never leave its favoured objects till it brings them into the enjoyment of eternal life. And if this does not melt and move the soul, and make a man praise and bless God, nothing will, nothing can.

But until we have entered into the depths of our own iniquities, until we are led into the chambers of imagery, and brought to sigh, groan, grieve, and cry under the burden of guilt on the conscience, and the workings of secret sin in the heart—it cannot be really known. And to learn it thus, is a very different thing from learning it from books, or ministers. To learn it in the depths of a troubled heart, by God's own teaching, is a very different thing from learning it from the words of a minister, or even from the word of God itself. We can never know these things savingly and effectually, till God himself is pleased to apply them with his own blessed power, and communicate an unctuous savour of them to our hearts, that we may know the truth, and find to our soul's consolation, that the truth makes us free.

41 ZION'S BLESSINGS

Preached on Lord's Day Evening, , at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London

July 16th, 1843

"I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy." Psalm 132:15, 16

The most inattentive reader of Scripture must perceive that great things are spoken in the Word of God concerning Zion. As the Bible lies now open before me, my eye rests upon nine Psalms, and out of those nine Psalms in five I observe Zion spoken of, and blessings mentioned as belonging to her. This is but one instance out of many, and one that has only just struck me, wherein we see that "glorious things are spoken of Zion" (Psa. 87:3).

But what is the meaning of Zion that such blessings should belong to her? Zion, literally, was the hill in Jerusalem on which the temple was built; and it was this circumstance which laid the foun-

dation for a spiritual meaning. What, then, did the temple signify? For in blessing Zion, God did not bless the literal hill of Zion, but He blessed that which stood upon Zion, the temple which was built upon that hill. But what did that temple represent? since we cannot think that God would lavish His blessings merely on a building erected by human hands; for the great God "dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands, seeing He giveth to all life and breath and all things" (Acts 17:24). But the reason why "the Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob," and why "the Highest Himself establishes her," (Psa. 87:2, 5), is because it was typical of that on which the eyes and heart of God are fixed perpetually (2 Chron. 7:16).

The temple, then, typified and represented two things. First, it typified the human nature of the Lord Jesus; as He Himself said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." And the evangelist adds, "But He spake of the temple of His body" (John 2:19, 21). The temple, then, on Mount Zion was typical of that holy human nature of the Lord Jesus which is indissolubly united to His eternal Godhead; and in which "it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell," that "out of His fulness we might receive, and grace for grace" (Col. 1:19 John 1:16).

But there is another thing which Zion typified, and that is, the Church of the living God, as the Apostle Paul declares: "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven" (Heb. 12:22, 23).

The Church never had a being except in Christ. Could we view the Church for a moment distinct from Christ, we should behold nothing but a dead carcase, the head being severed from it. But as the Church is a living body, it can only be so as eternally connected with its Head; and therefore the Church of God is never for a moment to be looked at except in its standing in Christ, its eternal being in the glorious Mediator, "Immanuel, God with us." And this

is the reason why the temple not merely set forth the human nature of the Lord Jesus, but typified also the Church, seeing that there is a vital, indissoluble union betwixt the Head and members.

If we look at the verses immediately preceding the text, we shall find Zion spoken of: "The Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it" (Psa. 132:13, 14). That the Lord should choose Zion, desire it for His habitation, eternally rest and dwell in it, cannot be true of any literal hill, or material temple. It can only, therefore, be spiritually understood as applicable to the human nature of Christ, which is the habitation of God (Col. 2:9), and to the Church, which is "His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:23) "Know ye not," says the Apostle, "that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16). When the text then says, "I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy," it speaks of Zion's provision, of Zion's bread, of Zion's priests, and of Zion's saints. Thus, in viewing the text, we must take it as it stands in connection with Zion, the Church of the living Jehovah.

Having seen, then, what Zion represents, we may enter into the meaning of the word, "her," so frequently repeated in the text; and if the Lord the Spirit is pleased to lead us into its spiritual import, we may gather up a little of the sweet promises contained in it. I shall, with God's blessing, take them in the order in which they lie before me.

I. The first promise runs thus: "I will abundantly bless her provision." Mark the emphasis laid upon the pronoun, "her." You see how it runs all through, "her provision," "her poor," "her priests," "her saints." And the repetition of the personal pronoun seems to intimate as though God, who is "a jealous God," would exclude from any appropriation of the promises in the text all but those who have an eternal interest in Christ; as though He would not suffer the children's bread to be given to the dogs; but would guard

the promises He has made to His Church by that special and repeated limitation.

"I will abundantly bless her provision." We have a "provision" spoken of here, and this provision is limited to Zion. It is not scattered abroad for every person to claim, or for anybody to feed upon; but is spoken of as a distinct provision set apart and reserved especially for Zion.

But what is this "provision?" It is, I believe, the fulness of spiritual blessings which are stored up in the Son of God, as "Head over all things to the Church." As the Apostle speaks, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). And again the apostle John says, "And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." This "provision," then, is the fulness of Christ as the covenant Head of His Church and people. And God has given to the Church this rich "provision," which He has stored up in Christ, that the poor and needy of Zion's children may "eat and be satisfied."

But the Lord promises to "bless" this "provision," and that "abundantly." It is not then sufficient for the Church of the living God that there should be a fulness for her stored up in her covenant Head; it must be "blessed;" it must be brought down out of the storehouse into her heart. Joseph, instructed by divine wisdom, gathered up the seven plenteous years into storehouses, and when the Egyptians cried for bread, Pharaoh's answer to all their entreaties was, "Go unto Joseph" (Gen. 41:55). He kept the key. But what if Joseph had never unlocked the stores? Why, they must all have perished of famine. He that kept the stores opened the stores, and by opening them, saved their lives from destruction. So the spiritual Joseph has "the key of David:" and of Him it is said, "He openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth" (Rev. 3:7) He deals out of this "provision" at such times, in such a way, and in such a measure, as "seemeth good" in His own eyes.

But what are the channels or conduits through which this provision flows that God has promised thus to bless?

1. One of the channels or conduits through which this provision flows is the gospel. And what is the gospel? It is the revelation of a free grace salvation, the manifestation in God's Word of pardon, mercy, and love for a peculiar people through the finished work of the Son of God. The gospel, then, is the proclamation and publication of the treasures that are stored up in Christ; and through the gospel, which is the revelation of God's love and mercy, does this "provision" flow, as through a blessed channel, into the hearts of God's people. God has promised to bless the gospel, and wherever the gospel is preached by God's sent servants, it is more or less blessed to souls; not from any works performed by them; not because they are poor and needy; but because God has stored up provision for them in their covenant Head, and because the preached gospel is one of the blessed channels of conveyance through which that provision flows into their heart.

You or I might have a sum of money lodged for our use in a banker's hands; but that would not profit us unless we had liberty to draw a cheque upon the banker. We might perish of starvation, and yet have a large sum lodged in his hands for our use. So it is with the gospel. A living soul cannot be satisfied with knowing that there is a treasure stored up for the Church in Christ. A few coins put into his hands by the gospel will more sensibly enrich him, and do his soul more present good than all the treasures of mercy and grace in Christ to which he has no feeling access. I can fancy a pauper, or a sweeper of the streets, or a beggar that lives upon alms walking by the Bank of England, and knowing perfectly that there are millions of bullion in its coffers and cellars. But will that clothe his nakedness? Will that relieve his famished appetite? Will that raise him from poverty to riches? The bare knowledge that there is money in the Bank will not relieve his poverty. And so you and I may know in our judgment, as a matter of doctrinal speculation, that there is in Christ all fulness treasured up. Will that

profit us? We must have the communication of it: the handling of it; the sweet manifestation of it, that our souls may be savingly blessed by it. And the gospel in the hands of the Spirit does this. When God is pleased to bless the gospel, either preached or read (and sometimes without the one or the other), and communicates through it a taste of the riches of Christ, of the beauty of Christ, and of the salvation that is in Christ, He then abundantly blesses this provision to the hearts of His people.

2. But again, the promises of God are also channels of communication, through which the provision stored up in Christ flows into the hearts of God's people. They are therefore spoken of in Scripture as "breasts of consolation," at which the new-born babes of the household of faith suck. We are also said "by them to be made partakers of the divine nature" (1 Pet. 1:4), they being channels of heavenly communication through which grace flows to renew us in the spirit of our minds. But what are the promises unless they are applied, brought home with power, sealed with a divine influence, so that we may enjoy them, feed upon them, and taste the sweetness that is in them? But when the promises come home with power, when a sweetness is tasted in them, and the heart is filled with the marrow and fatness of them, then the promises are so many channels and conduits of communication through which the provision stored up in Christ flows into the soul.

3. The ordinances, too, of God's house, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, when God is pleased to bless them, are channels through which grace and mercy flow into the soul. They are indeed nothing in themselves, absolutely valueless as mere forms; but when blessed of God, they are channels of communication, through which God is pleased sometimes to manifest His love and mercy to His people.

But the Lord has promised to bless Zion's provision abundantly. He does not, then, give grudgingly or niggardly, as though He ever repented of what He bestowed; but what He gives He bestows as a God, as a Prince, freely, bounteously, over-flowingly, worthy of

an infinite, eternal, self-existent Jehovah. "He giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth (or grudgeth) not" (Jas. 1:5). "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29); that is, He never repents of what He gives to, and does for His people. And thus when He does bless, He blesses "abundantly," so as to make the soul like Naphtali, "satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord" (Deut. 33:23).

But who are the characters that God thus abundantly blesses? If He blesses Zion's provision, He blesses it only to those who are poor and needy, hungry and naked, who have nothing and are nothing; and therefore can only have what God gives them, feel what God works in them, and be what God makes them. To such and such only is the provision of the gospel stored up in Christ blessed abundantly.

II. But we pass on to consider the second branch of blessings promised to Zion. "I will satisfy her poor with bread." As I before remarked, see how the Holy Ghost limits the expression, "Her poor!" And what gather we from this limitation? That there are poor who are not Zion's poor. It is said of many professed beggars in our London streets that they are impostors, clothed indeed in rags and wearing every appearance of poverty, but could you follow them to their cellars, you would see them throwing off all their apparent miseries, and feasting upon delicacies which the honest poor cannot procure. Are there not many such sham beggars in the religious world? Are there not many who in prayer profess to be all poverty and emptiness, and the next moment begin to boast of the mighty acts that free will can perform? These are sham beggars, impostors, that have rags of poverty and nothing but the rags of poverty; who use indeed expressions that might almost make us think they are really poor and needy, while all the time they have no feeling sense of their poverty before a heart-searching God. And, again, there are persons in a Calvinistic profession of religion who have learnt, if I may use the expression, "the cant of poverty." You know the professed beggar always begs in a certain whining

tone; he never speaks in his natural accent: he has a kind of professional whine. It is so with many, I fear, who profess to love experimental truth. They have the cant of poverty; they have got the true professional whine. But if you could look into their hearts, you would find them not really poor and needy by a work of grace upon their souls; but, like the Laodicean church, "rich and increased with goods, and in need of nothing." Now it is not of these sham poor that God speaks in the text—these religious impostors, these mock beggars, these tied up cripples, who on getting away from religious company, are as merry and cheerful as the London beggar is amongst his own crew. The text makes no promises to such, but limits the blessing to "her poor;" as though the heart-searching God saw that there were a great many professed poor who were not Zion's poor. Zion's poor are real paupers, true mendicants, unfeigned dependants upon alms; they have nothing and they are nothing in themselves but poverty, misery, and rags; they know it and they feel it; and when they tell God about it, it is not professional whine nor religious cant which they have learnt from others, but the genuine feelings of their broken hearts.

Now you, my friends, (some of you at least, who approve of experimental preaching), know that God's people are spiritually a poor and needy people. But look into your hearts. You profess spiritual poverty. But has God really made you poor? Has the Lord Himself stripped you? Or have you learnt the words, and not learnt the feelings? Have you caught up the mere expressions, without knowing bankruptcy and insolvency before a heart-searching Jehovah? Now, my friends, if you have not learnt by divine teaching what soul poverty is, you have no present manifested interest in this promise. Poverty naturally is a thing that we shrink from naturally, and poverty spiritually is a thing we shrink from spiritually; and as people, naturally, in embarrassed circumstances, will try every shift and make use of every means to keep from sinking into beggary: so spiritually, when God begins to strip a man of his fancied wealth, he will make use of every shift and every eva-

sion in order that he may escape that appalling sight of being poor and needy before a heart-searching God. There are many people who think that the standard in religion is usually set too high. I have read the remark, and I fully agree with it, that in general it is not placed sufficiently low. There are few people poor enough for Christ; they do not sink deep enough into soul trouble to be picked up by gospel consolation. They have not yet been in the Gazette; bankruptcy has not taken place; they have not come yet to thorough insolvency; they have not been brought into that spot which the Lord speaks of when He said, "When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both." Most persons—aye, and among them many of God's own dear children—are not poor enough for the gospel. Perhaps there are some here who are from time to time saying, "I cannot rejoice in Christ as I could wish; I cannot see my name in the book of life as I desire; I have not those sweet consolations which others of God's people speak of." Shall I tell you the reason? Shall I be honest with you? You are not yet poor enough; you have yet a little store at home; the loaf has not altogether disappeared out of the cupboard; the last penny is not yet spent out of your pocket; you have something still in hand; you are not yet poor enough for Christ. But when you become so poor that you have nothing whatever, and sink down into the depths of creature wretchedness, and "have nothing to pay," the Lord will frankly forgive you, and manifest His grace, mercy, and truth in your needy and naked soul.

Now the Lord has given a special promise to Zion's poor. "I will satisfy her poor with bread." Nothing else? Bread! Is that all? Yes; that is all God has promised; bread, the staff of life. But what does He mean by "bread?" The Lord Himself, in that blessed chapter, John 6, explains what bread is. He says, "Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." "I am," He says, "the bread of life." And again, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever" (John 6:35, 51). The bread, then, that

God gives to Zion's poor is the flesh and blood of His own dear Son; not received in the elements, as Popery and Puseyism teach, but fed upon by living faith, under the special operations of the Holy Ghost in the heart.

But must not we have an appetite before we can feed upon bread? The rich man who feasts continually upon juicy meat and savoury sauces could not subsist upon bread. To come down to live on such simple food as bread—why, he must be really hungry to be satisfied with that. So it is spiritually. A man fed upon notions and a number of speculative opinions cannot descend to the simplicity of the gospel. To feed upon a crucified Christ, a bleeding Jesus! He is not sufficiently brought down to the starving point to relish such spiritual food as this. Before, then, he can feed upon this bread of life he must be made spiritually poor; and when he is brought to be nothing but a mass of wretchedness, filth, guilt, and misery, when he feels his soul sinking under the wrath of God, and has scarcely a hope to buoy up his poor tottering heart; when he finds the world embittered to him, and he has no one object from which he can reap any abiding consolation, then when the Lord is pleased a little to open up in his conscience, and bring a savour of the love and blood of His dear Son into his heart, he begins to taste gospel bread. Being weaned from feeding on husks and ashes, and sick “of the vine of Sodom and the fields of Gomorrah,” and being brought to relish simple gospel food, he begins to taste a sweetness in Christ crucified which he never could know till he was made experimentally poor. The Lord has promised to satisfy such.

And what a sweetness there is in the word “satisfy!” The world cannot satisfy you and me. Have we not tried, and some of us perhaps for many years, to get some satisfaction from it? But can wife or husband “satisfy” us? Can children or relatives “satisfy” us? Can all the world calls good or great “satisfy” us? Can the pleasures of sin “satisfy” us? Is there not in all an aching void? Do we not reap dissatisfaction and disappointment from everything that is of the creature, and of the flesh? Do we not find that there is little

else but sorrow to be reaped from everything in this world? I am sure I find, and have found for some years, that there is little else to be gathered from the world but disappointment, dissatisfaction, "vanity and vexation of spirit." The poor soul looks round upon the world and the creature, upon all the occupations, amusements, and relations of life, and finds all one melancholy harvest, so that all it reaps is sorrow, perplexity, and dissatisfaction.

Now when a man is brought here, to want satisfaction, something to make him happy, something to fill up the aching void, something to bind up broken bones, bleeding wounds, and leprous sores, and after he has looked at everything, at doctrines, opinions, notions, speculations, forms, rites, and ceremonies in religion, at the world with all its charms, and at self with all its varied workings, and found nothing but bitterness of spirit, vexation and trouble in them all, and thus sinks down a miserable wretch; why, then, when the Lord opens up to him something of the bread of life, he finds a satisfaction in that which he never could gain from any other quarter. And that is the reason, my friends, why the Lord afflicts His people so; why some carry about with them such weak, suffering tabernacles, why some have so many family troubles, why others are so deeply steeped in poverty, why others have such rebellious children, and why others are so exercised with spiritual sorrows that they scarcely know what will be the end. It is all for one purpose, to make them miserable out of Christ, dissatisfied except with gospel food; to render them so wretched and uncomfortable that God alone can make them happy, and alone can speak consolation to their troubled minds.

My friends, if there be any young persons here whose heart God has touched with His Spirit, and you are yet seeking some satisfaction from the world; if your health and spirits are yet unbroken, and you are looking to reap a harvest of pleasure from the creature, depend upon it, if you are a child of God, you will be disappointed. The Lord will cut up by the roots all your anticipated pleasure. He will effectually mar your worldly happiness. He will

never let you have an earthly Paradise, and it is your mercy that He will not. If you are looking for happiness from wife or husband, from business, from the world, from whatever your carnal heart is going out after, depend upon it, God will let you take no solid nor abiding pleasure in them, but He will cut up by the roots all your earthly enjoyments. He will mar all your worldly plans, and bring you to this spot, to be a miserable wretch without Christ, to be a ruined creature without the manifestations of the Son of God to your soul. And when you can find no pleasure in the world, no happiness in the things of time and sense, but feel misery in your soul, and are fearing lest eternal misery be your portion in the world to come, you, you, will then be the very characters that God will comfort through the gospel, and give you a manifested interest in the promise made to Zion, "I will satisfy her poor with bread." You will not then be one of those full souls that loathe the honeycomb, but one of those hungry souls to whom every bitter thing is sweet. And it is your mercy, and in my right mind, I believe it is my mercy—(though few, perhaps, more dislike afflictions, troubles, and trials than I do)—that we cannot take pleasure in the world. If we could, I know where and what I should be. I should be pursuing the vain imaginations of my carnal heart, and trying to reap pleasure where real happiness never can be found; turning away from the gospel and all the promised blessings of the gospel, as the children of Israel turned away from the manna, "Our soul loatheth this light bread." Religion! what would you care for religion if you could love and enjoy the world? Why, a man's heart is so proud and worldly that he would not touch vital, spiritual religion unless he was absolutely forced by the hand of God in his soul. He absolutely would not so much as look at it, unless sorrow of heart, perplexity of mind, anguish of spirit, afflictions, and a conscience burdened with guilt made him seek happiness there, because every other path to happiness is effectually blocked up.

Now the Lord says, "I will satisfy her poor with bread." And they shall be satisfied. For He says, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea,

drink abundantly, O beloved" (Song 5:1). He will make them drink "of the river of His pleasures" (Ps. 36:8); for "there is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God" (Ps. 46:4). And if any of you, my friends, are mourning, sighing and groaning, and sometimes heaving up with rebellion and fretful impatience because you cannot have what you wish naturally to enjoy, or because you cannot bring about your earthly schemes, and have little else but sorrow of heart and trouble of soul, you are far more favoured than if you could have all that heart could wish. God, who has made you wretched that you might find happiness in Him, will not leave you to live and die in your misery. He will bind up every bleeding wound, and pour the oil of joy into your troubled heart.

III. "I will also clothe her priests with salvation." Still the same limitation that we have before noticed, "her priests." And as "her poor" were divinely marked out and limited, so "her priests" are shut up in the same bound; and I think in our day, when Puseyism and Popery are so rampant, a very sweet and wise limitation. Who then are "priests," in the gospel sense of the word? Men on whom the Lord Bishop has laid holy hands? Men ordained by a conclave of dissenting ministers? Men who appear before the people in a gown, and bands, and gold rings? men who on their cards, and on the brass plates of their doors, call themselves, "The Rev. Mr. So and So?" Are these Zion's priests? I will not say that none such are gospel priests; but these externals neither make them nor manifest them to be so. Let us then turn from these inventions of man to what the Holy Ghost has said upon this subject. What read we there? "Who hath made us kings and priests unto God" (Rev. 1:6). And again: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Peter 2:9). Then the true priests, "Zion's priests," are God's spiritually taught people; all who, as the Apostle says, as "living stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). God's praying people, then, His broken-hearted, mourning, sighing, crying, weeping, pleading people,

all in whose hearts the Spirit of the living God intercedes with unutterable groanings, and works in them the sacrifices of a broken heart which in the sight of God are of great price—these, and these only, are Zion's priests. My friends, be not deceived by pretensions. Think not that there is something in the ministry under the gospel similar to the old Jewish priesthood. Be not imposed upon by priestcraft. You are priests, if God has given you a broken heart; you are a "holy, a royal priesthood," if God is kindling the sacrifices of prayer and praise in your soul. And these are the only priests of Zion, whether in or out of the ministry. All others are priests of Baal. And they may cry from morning until evening, they may cut their flesh with lancets, and inflict on themselves all the self-imposed austerities of Popery and Puseyism, there will be "neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any to regard them" (1 Kings 18:29). There will be no holy fire coming down from heaven, no still small voice whispering pardon and peace; as Zion's priests experience, who "worship God in Spirit and in truth." Do you then know what groaning prayer is? Do you know anything of secret sighs and cries unto God? Do you know what it is to pant after Jesus as the hart panteth after the water brooks? Is your soul alive unto God, seeking His face, groaning after the manifestations of His mercy? Then you are a priest, though holy hands were never laid upon you. And if you know not these inward teachings, not all the church priestcraft nor all the dissenting priestcraft that ever imposed on the minds of men can make you one of Zion's priests, or give you an interest in the promises made to them.

But God has promised that "He will clothe these priests with salvation;" not clothe them with a gown and bands,—He makes no promise of that kind; but He will clothe them with salvation. And that is the only clothing that will suit Zion's priests. For a priest of Zion having a broken heart and a contrite spirit, having had the spirit of prayer communicated to him, and panting after God, the living God, wants a manifested salvation. He does not want the praise of men, or to be esteemed as some holy being, appointed of

God to communicate blessings; he abhors such priestcraft. What he wants is the spiritual manifestation and divine application of salvation to his soul,—salvation in all its sweetness—salvation from sin, from self, from the curse of the law, from the wrath of God, from the snares of Satan, from the temptations which he is beset with, from the troubles which he is passing through—salvation in all its rich, glorious, and complete fulness. Now God has promised that He “will clothe these priests with salvation.” He will cast around them this beauteous garment, this robe of Christ’s righteousness; He will cover them therewith, “as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and a bride adorneth herself with her jewels” (Isa. 61:10).

If you have never yet known, then, what it is to sigh and cry and groan unto the Lord, and offer up these breathings of a broken heart, you have no present manifested interest in the promise, “I will clothe her priests with salvation.” O, it is a mercy to be a broken-hearted sinner! In my right mind, I would sooner be a broken-hearted sinner than the most towering professor alive. I would sooner lie at Jesus’ feet with a real contrite spirit and a broken heart, feel the blessed emotions of godly sorrow, clasp Him in my arms as my Lord and my God, and taste the beams of mercy shining into my soul out of the Sun of righteousness, than be the most eloquent, the most popular, or the most towering preacher that ever stood up in a pulpit. I covet not such baubles. The real thing which I covet, in my right mind, is to lie at the feet of the blessed Lord, and feel Him to be precious to my soul.

IV. “And her saints shall shout aloud for joy.” What! limitation again! Must the Lord be ever hedging His promises in, lest the dogs take hold of them? Must the Lord keep His own hand firmly fixed upon them, lest those to whom they do not belong should break in, and seize them? Even so; the Lord must limit them; for, after all His positive limitations, men will still break through the hedge.

“Her saints.” “Who is a saint?” A solemn visaged man? A fasting man? A man who macerates his body with austerities? These

are not God's saints. They are such as carnal men may look up to with admiration; but they are not Zion's saints, whom the Lord has promised that they shall "shout aloud for joy." Who then are they? Those whom God has eternally sanctified by choosing them in Christ before the world began; those into whose hearts He has put the Spirit of holiness, that they may be a "peculiar people, vessels of mercy, sanctified and meet for the Master's use;" those in whom He is working "to will and to do of His good pleasure." These are Zion's saints. Now Zion's saints are all sinners to a man; that is, they are all feeling sinners; and the more they are saints, the more they are sinners; that is, the more God teaches them in their souls, sanctifies and separates them to His own use, the more vile, filthy, base, and polluted do they feel before Him. How are you to judge of your saintship? By becoming day by day more and more holy, more and more pure, more and more pious, and more and more religious? That is a false sanctity which only feeds the flesh; that is only nature masked and whitewashed. But Zion's saint grows downward—downward in self-abhorrence, self-loathing, godly sorrow, brokenness of heart, contrition of spirit, low views of himself. And just as he grows downward in self, will he grow upward in adoring, admiring, and loving the Lord of life and glory. And what then? Will this root sin out of him? Saints are partakers of a holy nature, and this "divine nature," as the Scripture calls it, in them makes known to them, but does not root out their sinfulness. A saint is rather one who is crying unto God on account of his sinnership, who is abhorring himself on account of his baseness, who sees nothing in himself spiritually good, and loathes himself from time to time in dust and ashes.

Now the Lord has promised to Zion's saints (for there are mock saints, as well as mock beggars), that "they shall shout aloud for joy." They shall not be always mourning and crying; they shall not be always groaning from heaviness of heart and trouble of soul; but they shall "shout aloud for joy." When, where, and how? When the Lord blesses their souls, when He visits them with His gracious

presence, and sheds His love abroad in their hearts, then they shall "shout aloud for joy." Not, however, because they are saints; not because of their mighty victories over sin, the world, and the devil; not because they are becoming more decidedly pious and more eminently religious; not because they have got a little pleasing holiness in the flesh which they can look at and admire. Of these who say, "Stand by, I am holier than thou," God says, "they are as a stench in His nostrils." But those who see and feel themselves to be filthy, base monsters of iniquity, crawling reptiles, guilty, defiled, and polluted before a heart-searching God; when these receive into their souls a precious Christ, in His love and blood, in His grace and glory, they "shout aloud for joy," not because of the mighty works they have done, are doing, or mean to do, but on account of what the Lord has done for them, and what the Lord has done and is doing in them.

See, my friends, how God has limited these promises! They are not thrown down for anybody to pick up, but they are limited; and I should not stand up as a faithful God-fearing man if I did not limit them. They stand in God's Word limited, and they come into my heart limited, and therefore they must come out of my mouth limited. But happy are those who are within the bound; happy are those who are "a peculiar people," who are walled about with God's promises and with God's mercy! They are within a fence, never to be broken, of God's eternal purposes, and God's eternal love. O happy are those whom God has gathered in with His own blessed hands, that they may be "a garden enclosed," in which the Lord walks, and "the spices flow out" as He visits and comes into this blessed garden; (Song 4:12, 16.)

You then whose hearts God has touched will not be offended because He has given limitations. That makes all the sweetness of them, that they are limited, and that you—(O wonder of wonders!) you have an interest in them. O, my friends, who am I, and who are you, that the Lord should take notice of us? Were any so far from salvation as you and I—any so proud, any so hypocritical, any so

self-righteous, any so madly in love with sin, any so the servants of the devil, as you and I have been? And if God has taken notice of us, to what shall we ascribe it? I think sometimes that of all persons that were ever called by grace, I was the farthest from God's fold, the most unworthy, and the least likely for God ever to take out of the world, and to make and manifest me as "a vessel of honour meet for the Master's use." Not that I was living in open sin, or at least in those lengths to which others have gone, but so proud and worldly, and so buried in the things of time and sense was I, that it seems to me that it was not only a miracle, but a double miracle, that God should ever pluck my guilty soul out of the ruins of the fall, and bring me to this spot to be now preaching His truth in His name and His fear. And I believe it is the conviction, the heartfelt conviction, of all who fear God, that of all they were the farthest from the kingdom of heaven, and of all they were the least likely for the Lord to look upon. They are all brought to the spot to which the Lord brought Ruth, when she wondered that Boaz "should ever take knowledge of her, seeing she was a stranger" (Ruth 2:10).

Then you and I have no reason to quarrel with God's limitation of His promises. If the Lord has put us within the bounds, remember He keeps us in as well as keeps others out; and if He did not keep us in, we should soon fall out through some gap. But the Lord by His limitations keeps His people in, and keeps the world out; and thus, by keeping His people in, He preserves them unto the end, and leaves the wicked to perish in their own justly deserved doom.

We shall not, then, contend with the Lord, and say He is an arbitrary God. We acknowledge His sovereignty; we bow before it with holy adoration and implicit submission. We quarrel not with Him because He is a Sovereign, but we adore Him and bless Him that His sovereignty should be displayed in a way of mercy, and not in a way of wrath. That He should limit His promises we quarrel not with Him; but that He should give us a name and a place

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amongst His children, that He should give you and me, the vilest,
the basest, and the unworthiest, a standing in His Church and family,
that, indeed, is a mercy, and that indeed is a wonder of matchless
grace. And therefore so far from carping at God's limitation, and
cavilling at the way in which God has fenced out some and fenced
in others, in our right mind, under the sweet enjoyment of gospel
blessings, we shall only bless Him and praise Him the more for it,
and fall down before Him, ascribing honour and power and salvation
and glory to God and the Lamb.

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Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Thursday
Evening,
July 13, 1843

*"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection."
Philippians 3:10*

When God created man in his own image, after his own likeness,
and placed him in the garden of Eden, he gave him this one prohibition,
"Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the
knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that
thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. 2:16, 17.) God thus
prohibited Adam from seeking the knowledge of good and evil: he was
to be fully satisfied with knowing his Creator, and not to grasp at any
other knowledge than that which was contained in God himself. When
Satan, then, tempted the woman, it was by holding out some advantage
as the fruit of disobedience. His words were, "God doth know that in
the day that ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall
be as gods, knowing good and evil." (Gen. 3:5.) Elevation into Godship
and into knowledge, as yet unattained to, was the bait that the arch-
deceiver laid before her, the peculiar temptation that he

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presented to her mind. And the Holy Ghost has revealed how that temptation worked: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." (verse 6.)

Now there were three things that worked with, and constituted the chief force of this temptation. First, that "the tree was good for food." Secondly, that "it was pleasant to the eyes." And thirdly, "that it was to be desired to make one wise." To this temptation she listened; and as it entered into her mind, it bred these three desires working powerfully together—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the lust of knowledge. Under their united power she fell, and by so doing disobeyed the solemn prohibition of God. And then, by drawing the man, in whom as their covenant-head all his posterity stood, into the committal of the same sin with herself, she involved the whole human race in one common gulph of misery and ruin. And alas! this "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" has been in the heart of man ever since, striking its deep root downward, and bringing forth its bitter fruit upward: for the thirst which our first parents had after knowledge, at any price and at any cost, is still continually alive in their posterity, craving the same gratification. I can speak experimentally on this point; for I think few persons have had from childhood a greater thirst after human knowledge than myself. Nay, even since the Lord has quickened my soul, though fully convinced of its emptiness and worthlessness, I have felt the strongest temptations to indulge eagerly in the pursuit of it; and one of the greatest exercises of my mind, and what has often brought guilt upon my conscience, has been an inordinate thirst after the various branches of human knowledge, it being so suitable to my natural disposition, as well as fostered by the whole course of my education. But it is a seduction which draws away the soul from spiritual things, fosters the native infidelity of the heart, and leads it to seek its happiness in

external things, instead of that which is to be found in the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

But this was the first and strongest temptation. And I doubt not that the Apostle Paul was similarly exercised; for if he had not naturally had a great thirst after human knowledge, he would not have sat as he did at the feet of Gamaliel, who was a man so deeply skilled in all the various branches of learning then pursued. But when he had once powerfully felt the hand of God in his soul, he was brought to see that all his attainments in human knowledge were mere vanity and emptiness. He deeply felt the utter nothingness of human learning to speak pardon and peace; and, by the mighty work of the Holy Ghost on his heart, he was brought to part with every creature attainment, and all human wisdom, for the knowledge of that one grand Object, which is the only one really worth knowing, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

The Apostle was in this sweet and blessed frame of mind, counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, when, under divine inspiration, he wrote this chapter. But it may be as well, before we enter into the experimental meaning of the words of the text, to trace out the work of grace which God was carrying on in his soul, and which brought him into that spiritual state of mind, so as to "count all things but dung that he might win Christ." He had told us, that those only were the true circumcision who "worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." It was this last expression which led him to enter into his own experience, for he says, "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh." And then he tells us whence he might derive his fleshly confidence. "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more." He then goes on to enumerate certain particulars, which in those days the pharisaical Jews chiefly rested in as ensuring them

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the favour of God, such as, "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." Well might he, then, on these grounds, as a blind, ignorant Pharisee, have had a feeling of confidence in the flesh; and till the day of his death would he have rested here, if God had not mercifully opened his eyes to see his own guilt and misery; and thus cut from under his feet the ground whereon he rested. He therefore goes on to say, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Thus God, by a secret and powerful work in his conscience, not only cast down all his fleshly confidence, stripped him entirely of his natural religion, showed him the emptiness of every hope in which he had so fondly trusted, and by sending his holy law into his conscience, slaughtered him outright (Rom. 7:9); but also, he manifested to his understanding, and revealed in his soul a precious Saviour, and thus drew forth all the affections of his heart, fixing them wholly and solely upon Jesus. He then saw by the eye of faith such loveliness and preciousness in Christ, that every other object of desire or affection faded away; and those aims and pursuits which once seemed his richest gain, he could now rejoice in and pursue no longer; they utterly sank in his esteem; vanity and emptiness were stamped upon them; and he counted them as absolute loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

Before, then, any one can experimentally enter into these words, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection," he must experimentally pass through something of the same process as the Apostle; every thing must be taken away from him in which he once fondly trusted, every false hope must be demolished, and all creature good felt to be vanity and emptiness. These things must be wrought experimentally by a divine power in his soul; and their effect will be to bring him down into the dust and

ashes of self-abasement. And when the sinner is brought thus to sink down before God into all the felt ruin of the creature, it is the work of the blessed Spirit to take of the things of Christ, and reveal them to his heart and conscience, and so fill him with love to the Lord of life and glory. Then every thing else, as well as every other object of hope or desire, will sink in his esteem as dross and dung in comparison with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.

We will now look, then, with the Lord's blessing, at the two main features in the text.

I.—The knowledge of Christ.

II.—The knowledge of the power of his resurrection.

I.—"That I might know him." But did not the apostle know him? Who ever possessed a tongue to speak forth greater or more blessed things concerning the riches of Christ's glorious Person, atoning blood, justifying righteousness, and finished salvation, than the great apostle of the Gentiles? Were these things with him mere doctrines and theories, and had he not in his soul an experimental acquaintance with the Lord Jesus? Had he not received the secret communications of Christ's dying love into his heart? Yes, surely. It was the very manifestation of these heavenly realities which brought him to desire more of them, and more intensely and ardently to seek them. The opening up of the treasures of Christ's love and blood in his soul, brought him to pant more earnestly after the enjoyment of them. He saw such unsearchable riches in Christ, that he found he knew so little of what was to be known, felt so little of what was to be felt, and lived so low, and so much beneath the enjoyments which were to be had in Christ, that in comparison he seemed to know nothing at all. He looked at his present experience, and saw how faint and feeble it comparatively was; and this made him vent forth his longing desires to know more of Jesus. In order, therefore, to have the same desires after the knowledge of Christ which the apostle had, there must be the same teachings by the blessed Spirit in our heart which were given

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to him. For unless the same experimental knowledge of Christ is imparted in a measure to us, Jesus will be to us but as “a root out of a dry ground;” there will be “no form nor comeliness” in him, nor any “beauty that we should desire him.”

When, therefore, Paul said, “That I may know him,” he was brought to that point where God brings all his people, to feel thoroughly convinced in their consciences that no man has any spiritual knowledge of Jesus except by the special revelation of the Spirit; as he himself declares, “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost.” So when the Lord asked his disciples saying, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” and they answered, “Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias; or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Then Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” But what did the Lord Jesus then say? Did he compliment Peter on the exercise of his reasoning powers? No; but answered, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 16:13-17.) The same solemn testimony the Lord bore in those remarkable words, “No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” (Matt. 11:27.) Nature in the exercise of all her faculties, and with all her reasoning powers, never knew anything experimentally of Christ. The flesh may know him doctrinally, in the letter of the word, but it never knew him in spirit and in power, nor by experimental revelation, special teaching, and divine demonstration of the Holy Ghost in the heart.

Before, then, any person can say feelingly, “That I may know him,” he must be brought to this point—that he never can know Christ by any creature ability, or by any exercise of the human intellect; that he never can receive such knowledge from man, whether it be from his own or from any other person’s instruction. In order therefore that he may feel his utter inability to bring

this knowledge into his heart, he must lie under the burden of this truth, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Thus these two things are absolutely necessary to be wrought with power into a man's experience, before he can enter into the spiritual meaning of the text; first, a deep sense in his heart and conscience of the utter inability of the creature spiritually and experimentally to know a precious Christ; and secondly, that it is the work and office of the Holy Ghost inwardly to reveal the Person, blood, righteousness, grace, and love of Jesus. And thus, the deeper the soul sinks in the knowledge of its ignorance, the higher it will rise in the knowledge of the Person and work of Christ; and the more the eye is anointed with eye-salve to perceive the ruin and misery of the creature, the more the soul will be brought to see that the glorious mysteries of salvation can only be realized by the special manifestations of the Holy Comforter, whose office it is to lead the child of God into all truth. The desire, then, of the apostle was to know Christ, and to have an experimental acquaintance with every thing belonging to and springing out of Christ.

1. He therefore desired to know the glory of his Person in the union of the Godhead with the manhood, in his complex character of Immanuel, "God with us." This is a mystery which nature has never fathomed, and which human reason never can comprehend. The more we look at it in the light of carnal reason, the more we are lost in utter amazement at this mystery; and after being, perhaps, tossed for a season to and fro with doubt and infidelity, and fully convinced that we are utterly unable to extricate our souls by sense and reason from the labyrinth in which they are lost, we are brought at last to this point, to receive the truth as a little child. For it becomes sealed in our conscience, that the kingdom of heaven is not to be entered into by climbing up into gospel mysteries by the ladder of human reason; but, as a little child receives the first rudiments of human knowledge, not by doubting, but simply on the authority of its teacher, so must the soul receive the great mysteries of

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truth from the mouth of God with unction and power. And thus the eye being anointed with eye-salve to see the union of God and man in one glorious Person, and the conscience being divinely wrought upon to feel what God speaks, the soul is no more left to reason about it, or to puzzle and perplex itself with the mystery, "How can it be?" but is made to sink down into the posture of a little child, and to receive with meekness a truth which is so sweet and suitable to its lost and ruined condition. There can be no earnest desire to know Christ, nor any holy panting after a spiritual revelation of him, while the heart is pursuing worldly objects; nor can there be any ardent seeking after a sight by faith of his glorious Person, while the mind is only speculatively informed, or, as in the case of too many, the judgment merely enlightened, without any divine savour or spiritual affection in the soul. But he who is spiritually taught is at times not only panting with holy longing and intense desires to know Jesus as Immanuel, but also that this blessed God-Man would come down in his heavenly power, in all his sweetness and suitability, and take up his abode in his soul, conforming it to his own image and likeness.

2. But again. In desiring to "know him," the soul desires to know every thing connected with him, and which springs out of him. It desires, for instance, to know the virtue of his atoning blood, which is derived solely from the union of the manhood with the Godhead in one glorious Person; for if Christ had not been God as well as man, there would have been no virtue in the blood shed upon the cross to atone for sin. But when the soul is brought to enter into the glorious mystery of an incarnate God, and the heart is drawn out to this Lord of life and glory as the centre and the object of its love and worship, then it is taught to feel the preciousness, and set a due value on the effects of Christ's atoning blood, and know it to be, as the Apostle says, "the blood of God." "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28.)

As long as a man lies dead in nature's darkness, he does not

know, neither has he any desire to know anything of this fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. He has never groaned under, nor felt the burden of sin; he has not smarted under the bite of that adder whose sting is unto death, and which causes a living conscience to bleed at well nigh every pore. In order therefore that he may be taught to set a right value upon the nature and efficacy of Christ's atoning blood, a man must be made spiritually to feel the greatness of his iniquity. Men talk of the blood of Jesus Christ as though any one could understand the glory of that mystery; but the blood of Jesus Christ is only to be known experimentally by the application of it to the guilty conscience. It is not for the whole-hearted, for those who are settled on their lees, and are at ease in Zion, who never groaned under the burden of sin, to know the balm of Jesus' blood. The blood of the Lamb is not applied to any but to the sin-sick, broken, and contrite heart. And whenever the spirit is broken, and taught to feel the burden of sin, sooner or later it is brought experimentally to taste the preciousness of the blood of sprinkling. And while the heart is thus opened by the Holy Ghost to feel its power, there will arise panting desires after a deeper acquaintance with its atoning efficacy and its cleansing power to purge the conscience from all its sin, guilt, and filth. Nor will these desires and this experience suffice for once only in a man's life. For whatever he may have known of its efficacy and power, whenever any discovery is made of new sin, or any fresh breaking out of old, he will be sure to need a fresh application of the balmy blood of Immanuel to his conscience, as that which alone can cleanse and wash it away.

3. But again. In desiring "to know" Jesus, the soul that is anointed by the Holy Ghost to see Christ's glorious Person and finished work, is also panting, as the Spirit is pleased to work upon it, to know, in personal experience and by divine manifestation, Christ's justifying righteousness. What is Christ's justifying righteousness to a Pharisee? to one dead in sin, or buried in the world? Until we are brought by the Holy Ghost to feel the guilt of sin in the conscience, and to know that we are utterly ruined and undone

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in ourselves, and stand naked and filthy before God, we cannot hunger nor thirst after the appropriation of that glorious robe of imputed righteousness which Christ wrought out and brought in, and which the Holy Ghost puts upon all those that believe in his name.

4. Again. The soul that desires to “know him” thirsts also after a blessed revelation of his dying love. When the eye is spiritually opened to see the glory of Christ’s Person, it follows him as a suffering Mediator to Calvary, there to view him as a crucified Jesus, as the Lamb of God bearing our sins in his own body on the tree. And as the child of God looks by faith to the bleeding Lamb, he desires to have a spiritual revelation and manifestation of the mystery of the cross to his heart, and by this dying love entering into his soul, he may “be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” (Eph. 3:18, 19.) The dying love of Christ spiritually felt and realized can alone wean the soul from the world, and make the things of time and sense to appear in their true light, as stamped with vanity and vexation of spirit. The dying love of Christ, also, revealed to the soul, is the only thing that can make us love Jesus, and cleave to him with full purpose of heart; and nothing but this can make us willing to leave the world, and part with the things of time and sense that so we may “ever be with the Lord.”

5. But in desiring to know Jesus by the teaching and revelation of the Holy Ghost, the soul that is born of God longs after a manifestation of him in all his covenant characters and relations. Is he spiritually held up before the eyes of the understanding as the great High Priest over the house of God? As such is he spiritually longed after to be known, that the power of his priestly intercession may be felt and realized? Is he set forth in the Scriptures as the Church’s Bridegroom and Husband? As such does the heaven-taught soul desire to realize his presence, and cry with the Bride (Song 1:2), “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth;

for thy love is better than wine." Is he the Church's Lord? As such does she desire to bow at his feet, and say, "Other lords beside thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." (Isa. 26:13.) Is he the Church's ever-living and ever-loving head? Out of his ever-flowing and overflowing fulness does she long to receive, and grace for grace. Is he her Advocate, Intercessor, Mediator, Brother born for Adversity, yea, Friend who sticketh closer than any earthly brother? As the Lord Jesus in those different covenant characters and endearing relationships is presented to the eyes of the spiritual understanding, faith flows out towards, hope anchors in, and love clasps firm hold of him as thus revealed; and thus ardent desires and fervent longings are kindled in the soul to know him experimentally in all these relations, and inwardly realize their sweetness and power. Every character that Jesus sustains has some reference to the felt and urgent wants of his people; and thus as they are from time to time brought into those circumstances of need and distress to which he in these various characters is suited, their desires flow forth toward him, that he would thus graciously manifest himself unto them. And thus, whatever treasures of grace and truth dwell in him, "in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell," as each are spiritually and successively made known to the soul, it desires inwardly and experimentally to realize them. Nor does it want the gifts severed from the Giver, or the love from the Lover; but as the enamoured bride desires to possess the husband as the centre of her affections, so does the soul taught of God desire inwardly to possess Jesus as the centre of her spirit's worship and heart's affections.

II.—But the apostle in the text not only desired to know Christ, but also to know "the power of his resurrection." What does he mean by the "power of Christ's resurrection?" In order to understand what is meant by the power, we must look a little at the nature of Christ's resurrection. The reason why the Scriptures speak so much of Christ's resurrection is, because it was, so to speak, the

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stamp which God put upon his work upon the cross. The visible proof that God gave that Jesus was the Son of God, was, that he raised him up from the dead. As the apostle says (Romans 1:4), "Declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the grand point which the apostles enforced in their preaching; and it makes the most prominent feature in every sermon recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the seal of his being the promised Messiah, the Christ of God. It was the Father's visible and undeniable testimony that he had finished the work which had been given him to do; and that being raised up by the power of God, the authority and approbation of God himself was undeniably stamped upon all that he meritoriously did and suffered.

But again. The resurrection of Christ is not merely the authoritative stamp which God set upon his work, but sets forth also the regeneration of the soul, according to those words, "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ." The Scriptures of the New Testament very much connect together the resurrection of Jesus with the regeneration of his people. The Church had an eternal union with the Son of God as her Covenant Head. She was therefore mystically crucified, buried, and raised up with Christ. The same power which raised up Christ from the dead works in her heart (Eph. 1:19, 20); so, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, she is to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4); and being "risen with Christ she seeks the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." (Col. 3:1.) Had the Church not risen with Christ she could not have been regenerated in due time by him. But the members virtually rising with their glorious Head, each in due season receives life out of him, as it says, "Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise." (Isa. 26:19.) Thus Christ's resurrection is the cause of the soul's regeneration; and regeneration is the inward proof of

Christ's resurrection, and of an interest in it. "Because I live, ye shall live also." "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." (Acts 2:38.)

1. As the resurrection, then, of Christ was the grand, visible stamp of God's approbation of his finished work, the decisive witness which the Father gave that he was his only-begotten Son, the promised Messiah, the Christ of God; to know the "power of his resurrection," is to know the power of God's approbation of the finished work of Jesus, and to have the stamp which God puts upon his dying love and atoning blood experimentally sealed upon the conscience. So that, in knowing the power of Christ's resurrection, the soul not only knows that the work of redemption is finished, that the Son of God has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, that he has "finished the transgression, made an end of sins, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness" (Dan. 9:24); but in knowing the approbation of God to be put upon the finished work of Christ, it is experimentally brought to feel that its sin is entirely put away, and its iniquity for ever abolished.

2. But Christ's resurrection, I observed, is also connected with the regeneration of his people. If Christ had not risen from the dead, all his people would have eternally perished; as the Apostle says, "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." (1 Cor. 15:17, 18.) But when Jesus rose from the dead all his elect spiritually and mystically arose with him, and thus his risen life at the right hand of the Father becomes their quickening life, for "the last Adam is a quickening Spirit;" and "those who have been planted in the likeness of his death are also planted in the likeness of his resurrection." To know, then, the power of Christ's resurrection is to know the power of his risen and endless life in the soul, and to feel the quickening energy and efficacy of his Spirit creating vital faith in the heart.

Thus, when sunk in carnality, darkness, and death, the soul longs to feel a sweet and blessed revival, it desires to know the power of Christ's resurrection. By virtue alone of his risen life can it arise out of that miserable state of barrenness and carnality into which it is so often sunk; and did not he for ever live who is our life, long ago would it have sunk to rise no more. His "visitation alone preserves our spirit;" and when the soul pleads "Wilt thou not revive us again that thy people may rejoice in thee?" it breathes forth in that petition its desire to know the power of Christ's resurrection.

3. But Christ in rising from the dead, rose triumphant over sin. He sank into the grave overwhelmed, as it were, with sin; for according to covenant engagement, God the Father, in making his soul a sacrifice for sin, caused to meet upon him the iniquities of all his redeemed; and in bearing their iniquities he poured out his soul unto death. But when Jesus rose from the dead all the sins of his church were left in the sepulchre. The reproach of Israel was rolled away with the stone that was rolled from the tomb where the Lord lay; and he rose as a justified person, as the apostle says, "justified in the Spirit" (1 Tim. 3:16); and therefore the Lord said in prophecy, "He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me?" To know, then, the power of Christ's resurrection is to be delivered from the guilt, filth, and power of sin in the conscience. Thus the knowledge of the pardon of sin is intimately and experimentally connected with the power of Christ's resurrection. God the Father has connected together the justification of the Head and the members, for "Christ was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." In desiring, then, to know the power of Christ's resurrection, the soul desires to feel and know that "by him it is justified from all things from which it could not be justified by the law of Moses." As therefore when Jesus rose from the tomb, the sentence of justification was openly and visibly pronounced upon him, so when his resurrection is felt in the soul, a sentence of justification is passed in the conscience;

and to know this is to know "the power of his resurrection."

4. But when Jesus rose from the dead, it was not to tarry here below. His words to his sorrowing disciples were, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." (John 16:7.) And again, "I go to prepare a place for you." Thus he rose from the dead that he might ascend to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God; and that his risen life might be their spiritual life. According to those words, "When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." (Col. 3:4.) And therefore the Apostle says, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20.) To know, then, the power of Christ's resurrection, is to know experimentally the power of that life which Christ now lives at the right hand of God for us; that he may be "our life," working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, and leading our souls up to himself that we may receive out of his fulness grace, mercy, and truth. To know, then, the power of Christ's resurrection in this sense, is to know the communications of that grace which raises us up out of that deadness and carnality which so often seizes hold of us; and, by virtue of the inflowing of the life of Christ, to be experimentally lifted up and brought out of that pit of worldliness, carelessness, and sensuality into which we so often sink, and beneath the mud and mire of which we feel as if suffocated. By the power of his resurrection we are kept from being altogether swallowed up and buried in the pool of our corruptions; by the power of his resurrection we are enabled to cry and sigh for deliverance; and by the power of his resurrection alone do we ever obtain it. Jonah, the type of Christ, came out of the whale's belly by the power of Christ's resurrection; and never would he have issued from that dark and doleful dungeon, had not his great Anti-type already, in the mind of him "who calleth those things which be not as though they were," risen from the dead.

5. Again. Does Death, the King of Terrors, ever alarm and terrify us? And is our mind sometimes perplexed how we shall be able to face this solemn messenger, who comes to summon us into the presence of God? To know the power of Christ's resurrection is to know a deliverance from this King of Terrors; for Jesus has passed through his territories, and disarmed him of his sting: he has perfumed the grave for all his saints by lying in it. Nay more; he has "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel." As the Apostle says, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Heb. 2:14, 15.) Thus "as by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For, as in Adam all died, even so in Christ shall all (that is, of the election of grace) be made alive." When, then, by a blessed reception of Christ's resurrection into the soul, the fear of death is taken away, this is to know the power of Christ's resurrection.

6. Again. Do we backslide? Does the soul depart from its first love? Is the heart overcharged with the cares of this life? Have carnality, carelessness, lukewarmness, and worldliness laid hold of the mind? To know the power of Christ's resurrection is to know a spiritual deliverance out of this God-dishonouring state. Every touch of God's spirit in the conscience, every look of mercy or of reproof, every going forth of the heart in secret prayer, every promise made sweet to the soul, every breathing of spiritual affection, every emotion of filial fear, every act of living faith, every sensation of godly sorrow—in a word, every recovery out of darkness and death, springs out of Jesus' risen life, and is therefore a knowledge of the power of his resurrection. When we do not look to him, nor live upon him, how we faint and sink in the way. How the hands hang down, how the knees totter, how the feet limp, how the lips stammer, how the heart becomes weak as water; and

how all our religion seems to have left us, and we can scarcely find a grain of godliness remaining. Thus the strength of Christ is made perfect in weakness, and the power of a risen Jesus is as much felt in raising up the soul now as it will one day be experienced in raising up the body.

If any of you, then, are brought to that spot where the Apostle was when he breathed forth these desires, it is because you have been led experimentally and vitally into these two things—to know yourselves, and to know the Lord; to know sin, and salvation; the malady, and the remedy; your wretched, lost, and ruined state by nature, and what Christ has done for every one who cometh unto God by him. Those, then, whom the Holy Ghost thus teaches, and whom he brings to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, do not learn these vital truths merely in the letter of the word, but they have an inward experience of their reality and power. But there is this peculiarity in the scholars of Christ's school, that they never can make themselves masters of their lesson. Unlike other pupils, they never "finish schooling;" and, after all the instruction bestowed upon them, die with their lesson but a quarter learnt. As Paul says, "We see through a glass darkly." Every ray of light serves but to manifest more our own darkness, and every fresh teaching convinces us more of our own ignorance. What we have only makes us long for more; and thus all the saints can join heart and hand with the apostle, in desiring to know Jesus and his power of resurrection. And this will run through every state and stage of experience. Is the soul doubting and fearing? There will be an experimental longing to feel an interest in the blood of Jesus; and these earnest desires will vent themselves in prayer and supplication for the manifestation of mercy, peace, and pardon. Does the conscience feel guilt, and lie as it were bleeding under the wounds made by sin? The longing desire of the soul will be to know Jesus, in the spiritual manifestations of himself, to take this guilt away. Does it feel darkness covering it like a pitchy cloud? Its longing desire and panting cry will be to know Christ, and the power of his

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resurrection, that by the shining in of the beams of the glorious Sun of Righteousness, it may see light in his light. Do temptations assault the mind? The soul desires to know him who was in all points tempted like as we are, and to feel the power of his resurrection by which he rose triumphant over them all. And just in proportion as he and the power of his resurrection are experimentally known, will the soul have a testimony, sealed with his own divine power.

A few sound Scriptural sentiments, or a mere tissue of doctrines in the head will never satisfy one taught of God. He must have an experimental enjoyment of their savour and power in his conscience; he cannot live comfortably, nor die happily without it; he must have the Spirit's own witness in his heart, and the Lord's own presence in his soul. Thus, while some are wise in the letter, and are perfectly satisfied with a mere doctrinal knowledge of the truth, he feels deeply and daily his wretched ignorance when not sensibly blest with divine teaching, and wants to be taught of God; while some are gathering together, with a wonderful deal of pains, heaps of bricks and slime to build up their Babel of confusion, he is seeking after the blessed revelations of Christ in his heart as the hope of glory; whilst others are resting their salvation upon the bare letter of the Bible, he hangs all his hope upon the finished work of Christ as experimentally made known in his heart; and while others are doing their works to be seen of men, and living upon the breath of the creature, he, in the stillness of his chamber, and in the depths of a broken heart, is looking wholly and solely unto the Lord.

How a living man can go on continually in a profession of religion for days, months, and years, contented with a sound creed and a few dreamy hopes, without any dissatisfaction with himself, or without repeated sighs, groans, and pantings after the Lord Jesus that he would make known in his soul the secrets of his dying love, and manifest himself unto him as he does not manifest himself unto the world, is a mystery which I cannot understand. It is a secret which I do not know, nor do I wish to know. Sooner

than be such a professor as that, I would make no profession at all; rather than be such a self-deceived, hardened wretch, with a name to live whilst dead, I would be a mere moral man, and make no pretensions to spiritual religion whatever. I am very sure Paul would have not owned such, for he was quite decided "to know not the speech of them which were puffed up, but the power." And what a contrast does he afford in his experience, as mentioned in the text, with such notional professors. Though he had been in the third heavens, and had seen and heard there things which it was neither lawful nor possible for a man to utter, yet he does not come forth like a mighty giant towering aloft, and looking down with pride and contempt upon the dwarfs at his feet; but he drops down into nothingness, and says, "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given;" "who am not worthy to be called an Apostle;" "the chief of sinners;" "though I be nothing;" "that I may know him," as if as yet he knew nothing as it was to be known. And why was this, but because his eyes had been spiritually opened to see the unsearchable riches of the Lord of life and glory; and one view of them had filled him with a deep sense of his own ignorance. But what a contrast does his experience form with the state of those who are wise in the letter of truth, but despise and ridicule all experience and the work of God in the heart. And what a contrast does his childlike teachability and his humble lying at the foot of the cross, present to the dead confidence and hardened presumption of many modern professors!

I wonder how many in this congregation are in the same spot with the Apostle Paul! How many as they lie on their midnight couch are panting after a knowledge of Jesus by his own special manifestations of himself! How many find the world, and the spirit of it, embittered to them, so that they can find neither rest nor happiness in it, and therefore seek it all at the foot of the cross? How many, driven out of every false refuge and lying hope, are anchoring their eternal all on the love and blood of the Lamb! Now all God's people are brought to this point in their experience

sooner or later. They are all brought to know their own sinfulness, ignorance, and helplessness. And when their eyes are thus anointed with eye-salve to discover their own wretchedness, the same unction from the Holy One reveals to them what Christ has done to save them from it. They learn by this sacred teaching their own iniquity, and his atoning blood; their misery, and the bliss and blessedness which is secured up in him. And when these two extremes meet in the quickened soul, it is brought in one and the same moment, while it debases itself, to exalt the Lord of life and glory. And while it thus sinks down in the depth of creature wretchedness, it learns to glory in the Lord Jesus alone, as its “all in all,” and “as God over all, blessed for evermore.” Amen.

43 THE CRY OF JONAH OUT OF THE BELLY OF HELL

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning,

July 16, 1843.

“Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.” Jonah 2:4

It is a great mercy for God's people that the account which the Holy Ghost has given of the saints in the Scripture is very different from the opinions which men form of them by nature. If we attend to the conceptions that the human heart naturally forms of saints, we should believe them to be a kind of intermediate being betwixt us and angels, far removed from all the frailties, sins and imperfections of humanity, never overtaken by slips and falls, but continually walking in the “beauty of holiness”.

But God has not recorded such imaginary saints in the Scriptures; and to beat down these foolish ideas, he has given us an account of the drunkenness of Noah, the incest of Lot, the unbelief of Abraham, the peevishness of Moses, the adultery of David, the idolatry of Solomon, the pride of Hezekiah, the cowardice of

Mark, and the cursing and swearing of Peter.

But why has the Holy Ghost left on record these sins and slips of the saints? I believe chiefly for three reasons. First, that it might teach us that they were saved by grace as poor, lost, and ruined sinners, in the same way as we hope to be saved. Secondly, that their slips and falls might be so many beacons and warnings, to guard the people of God against being overtaken by the same sins, as the Apostle speaks, "All these things happened to them for ensamples, and are written for our admonition" (1Cor. 10:11). And thirdly, that the people of God, should they be overtaken by sin, might not be cast into despair; but that from seeing recorded in the Scripture the slips and failings of the saints of old, they might be lifted up from their despondency, and brought once more to hope in the Lord.

Of all the recorded prophets, Jonah perhaps stumbles us naturally the most. His disobedient, rebellious conduct before the Lord so signally chastised him; and his impetuous language after he had received such a chastisement, and such a deliverance, when he said, "I do well to be angry, even unto death," have often stumbled those who know neither the depths of the human heart, nor the heights of God's superabounding grace! And yet, I believe, there are many of God's family, who have felt comforted and encouraged, not only by Jonah's rebellious conduct, but also by his perverse and unbecoming words. Not that they dare justify the one, nor approve of the other; but those who really know themselves, and have a deep sense of their baseness and abominable vileness before God, are sometimes enabled to derive a little sweetness from seeing to what lengths God's people who are evidently his saints, and even his inspired prophets, have been permitted to go.

I need hardly, perhaps, remind you, that the words of the text were uttered by Jonah when he was in the whale's belly. It was there he spake them in the bitterness of his soul; it was there that these words of sad despondency, and yet of strong faith, burst from his lips, "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight, yet I will look again

toward thy holy temple!"

But before we enter upon the words of the text, it may be desirable to trace out a few of the steps by which Jonah came into this spot: and then we shall, if the Lord enable us, see something not merely of the perverseness of a saint of God when left to himself, but we shall also perceive something of the exercises of godly fear in the midst of that perverseness.

We read (Jon. 1:1, 2), "The word of the Lord came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness is come up before me."

The Lord here gave Jonah a certain command. What that particular command was, does not very much concern us at present: suffice it to say, that it was contrary to Jonah's fleshly feelings, thwarted his natural inclinations, and was a burden laid upon him heavier than he could bear. What was the effect, then, of this command on Jonah? He disobeyed it. God did not supply him with strength to obey it; it was the Lord's will at that time to teach him another lesson; therefore he withheld from him the strength by which alone he could comply with his command. And that strength being withheld, disobedience was the inevitable consequence. But how did this disobedience work? "Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa" (Jon. 1:3). Now in this very rising up of Jonah to flee from "the presence of the Lord", we see, as I have before hinted, the workings of godly fear in the midst of his perversity and rebelliousness.

What is implied here by the expression, "the presence of the Lord"? It does not mean the universal presence of God, whereby he sees all things in heaven and earth. Jonah knew well that he could not escape from that, for "if he ascended up to heaven, God was there; if he made his bed in hell, he was there also" (Ps. 139:8). But by "the presence of the Lord" here must be intended his manifested presence, such as is made known in the assemblies of the saints, and which at that period was manifested at Jerusalem and in the temple.

Often, then, in experience, the first step which a child of God takes, when he cannot, through the perversity of the flesh, obey God's commands, is to withdraw himself from "the presence of the Lord". He shuns and forsakes the places where it is conspicuously manifested, his raw and tender conscience being unable to bear it. He withdraws himself, for instance, from a heart-searching ministry; from any deep or close experimental preaching, such as may lash his conscience; from the company of God's deeply taught and exercised people; from those who are walking in the light, life, and fear of the Lord. The manifestations of God's power and presence in them is a continual reproof to him; it rebukes his carnality, and checks his worldly plans. He cannot bear the lashes of conviction which this "presence of the Lord" produces, and yet is unable to walk in the path which conscience points out. He withdraws himself, therefore, from the cause of these stings and reproaches, and flees away from this continual source of guilt and condemnation.

But in the midst of all this inconsistency we see marks of life. Hypocrites living in sin can sit under the most heart-searching ministry; they can rest satisfied and contented under the most experimental preaching; their conscience is seared; and, therefore, the sharpest rebukes, and the keenest reproofs cannot touch them. Thus the very withdrawing of Jonah from "the presence of the Lord", instead of being a mark against him, is rather a mark for him, as it showed that his conscience was not seared as with a hot iron, but that it was still tender in God's fear.

After Jonah then had thus withdrawn himself, as much as he could, from those things which wounded and lashed him, he goes down to Joppa; and finding "a ship going to Tarshish, he pays the fare thereof, to go with them unto Tarshish, from the presence of the Lord" (Jon. 1:3). Thus a backslider buries himself in the world, as soon as he gets away from every thing that stings and pierces his conscience.

But did the Lord leave Jonah there, and let him fulfil his intentions? No! "The Lord sent out a great wind, and there was a

mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken." Here was the beginning of Jonah's chastisement, the commencement of the Lord's visibly taking notice of his disobedience. But what effect does it produce on Jonah? Apparently none whatever; he is stupefied. Having withdrawn himself from "the presence of the Lord", his conscience, though not dead, is become to a certain extent callous. The very storm that frightened the superstitious mariners, and made every man cry unto his god, did not alarm him. He was gone to sleep. He did not perceive, and therefore did not tremble at, the first manifestations of God's wrath.

Thus a living soul, when he gets into a backsliding state, and withdraws himself from an experimental ministry and the company of God's family becomes to a certain degree "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin". So that when God sends affliction, and deals out troubles, he at first often does not feel it; like Jonah, he is asleep, and the conscience is callous.

What a strange thing, that the very mariners, who worshipped false gods, and had no religion but a few superstitious ideas, should be more alarmed at the tempest, than the prophet of God himself! So, when our hearts begin to grow hard, and the conscience has lost its former tenderness in God's fear, the very things that frighten others seem to have no effect on us. The judgments of God and the manifestations of his anger, which terrify even those who make no profession of religion, pass us by unfelt, and leave us unmoved.

But time, I see, will scarcely permit me to run through all the steps which eventually brought Jonah into the whale's belly; yet one thing I must just touch on, and that is, the effect which was produced on his conscience, when at length it was effectually aroused. God would not suffer him to continue sleeping on; he causes the storm to become heavier, and the ship-master awakes him out of his sleep. And when they proceeded to cast lots, "to know for whose cause the evil had come upon them", "the lot fell upon Jonah".

God's finger singled him out from all the rest. And now, when his conscience is awakened by this distinct pointing of him out, and the wrath of God is flashing into his soul, he is penetrated through and through with a sense of his disobedience, and he feels the hand of God to be gone out against him. And then what follows? Doubt, despair, and overwhelming despondency. "Take me up," he says, "and cast me forth into the sea". I have sinned against God! Cast me out, "for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you".

And when with much reluctance they had taken him up, and cast him into the sea, God did not leave him there, for he "had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah: and he was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights". But in this awful spot, the very "belly of hell", as he calls it, Jonah begins to come to himself. His disobedience, and the consequence of it, the anger of God, were so opened up to his soul, "when the depth closed him round about", that he was overwhelmed with distress.

In Jonah's state, temporal and spiritual, we see marks, not merely of his being a child of God, but of his merciful dealings toward him, in not suffering him to do what he pleased; he would not allow him to "go down to Tarshish", to bury himself in the world, and forsake vital godliness. Nor will God suffer any of us, whose hearts he has touched by his fear, to do so. We may lay down our plans, and say, "we will do this, or that thing"; but God will disappoint every plan we make, which will not be for our spiritual good, and for his eternal glory.

When every proposed plan, then, is disappointed, and the frown of God is sensibly felt in the conscience, the soul sinks into distress and despondency; and then is the time when the Lord begins to show forth the power of his mighty arm, and to work according to his own eternal purpose.

Without further preface, then, we come to the words of the text, breathed forth by Jonah, when he was in that awful and distressed condition: "Then he said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I

will look again toward thy holy temple.”

We may observe here two leading features.

I.—Jonah’s despondency.

II.—Jonah’s faith, working in the midst, and in spite of his despondency.

I.—Jonah’s despondency. “Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight.” What do these words imply? What is it to be “cast out of God’s sight”? They imply a deep feeling of being cast out from the manifestation of God’s presence to the soul. And thus poor Jonah, when he spake these words, uttered them in the very bitterness of his heart; he felt that he was cast out of God’s gracious presence.

But he must have known something experimentally of the sweetness of God’s manifested presence; he must have tasted that heaven was in it, and that all his happiness centered there. He must have enjoyed this in order to know if God’s presence were not felt in the soul, there was but one barren scene of gloom and death; and that to be “cast out of his sight”, was the commencement of hell upon earth.

Now here a living soul differs from all others, whether dead in sin, or dead in a profession. The persuasion that in God alone is true happiness; the feeling of misery and dissatisfaction with every thing else but the Lord, and everything short of his manifested presence, is that which stamps the reality of the life of God in a man’s soul. Mere professors of religion feel no misery, dissatisfaction, or wretchedness, if God shine not upon them. So long as the world smiles, and they have all that heart can wish, so long as they are buoyed up by the hypocrite’s hope, and lulled asleep by the soft breezes of flattery, they are well satisfied to sail down the stream of a dead profession.

But it is not so with the living soul; he is at times panting after the smiles of God; he is thirsting after his manifested presence; he feels dissatisfied with the world, and all that it presents, if he cannot find the Lord, and does not enjoy the light of his countenance. Where this is experienced, it stamps a man as having the grace of

God in his heart. And thus Jonah, having tasted the sweetness, and realized the blessedness of the manifested presence of the Lord, when cast out of his sight, cried as if "out of the belly of hell".

And do not all God's people feel a measure of this when sunk deep in distress and despondency? It is not indeed always the fear of the pains of hell, of its sulphurous flames, and ever-burning fire though these may have their solemn weight and power, but to be banished from the presence of God, in which their soul desires to find eternal bliss and joy, never to behold his glory, or be swallowed up in the everlasting contemplation and boundless enjoyment of his presence; it is in this that much of the anguish of the distressed soul consists. It is not so much the fear of punishment, or the mere pangs of slavish dread, but the feelings of a child banished from his Father's house.

To be cast then out of God's sight, implies the being banished I do not mean eternally, but in experimental soul feeling from the manifested presence and enjoyment of God.

But what are the prominent feelings in being thus "cast out"?

1. That of guilt. The God-taught soul knows the Lord's pure eyes cannot look on sin, and that he cannot behold iniquity but with abhorrence. Therefore "to be cast out of God's sight", implies a burden of guilt lying on the conscience; that our sins are so numerous, our backslidings so aggravated, our iniquities so dreadful, that we dare not come into the presence of him whose holy and pure eyes cannot look on us with acceptance.

2. Another prominent feeling is, that of filthiness. When the Lord by his blessed Spirit opens up the depths of a man's corrupt heart, and takes away the veil of self-delusion that is spread over it by nature, he covers him with shame and confusion of face, and makes him feel that he is too black and filthy, too vile and polluted to be admitted into his sacred presence. Thus we feel "cast out", as being too filthy to come into God's sanctuary.

3. Another prominent feeling is that of misery and wretchedness. When Jonah uttered these words, he spake them in the an-

guish of his soul. Perhaps there is no feeling more bitter for a living soul to experience than to be “cast out of God’s sight”. If we are in trouble, and the Lord is by our side, he makes trouble light. If we are passing through heavy scenes of tribulation, and the Lord sensibly lays his everlasting arms underneath the soul, he bears it up. If the body is afflicted, if all things appear to be against us in providence, if there be family trials and sorrows, if the Lord be but present, if he but support the soul, and speak comfort to the heart, all these things can be borne; “for the spirit of a man can sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear”?

But when, in addition to all the afflictions and troubles of this mortal life, God himself seems to frown on the soul, when he appears to take no notice of it, and neither to hear nor answer its prayers; and when, instead of pouring oil and wine into the bleeding wounds, it seems as though he were rather pouring into them venom and poison, this is indeed to be experimentally “cast out of God’s sight”.

But another prominent feeling, is that of most complete helplessness. What a different thing it was for Jonah to withdraw himself from the Lord’s presence, and for God to withdraw his presence from Jonah. He easily enough withdrew himself from the Lord, but when he would come back, and return to his former position: when he would fain once more bask in the Lord’s smiles; when he would once more cry from the bottom of his heart “my Father”; when he would once more enjoy the tokens of adopting love; when he would once more look upon the cancelling of his sins, and the blotting out of his transgressions; when he would once more creep into the very bosom of a covenant God, alas, there was no approach. His helplessness, impotency, and inability blocked up the way; and the Lord not drawing, but rather repelling him, every approach served only to drive him farther and farther back.

Thus, these four prominent feelings, guilt, filth, wretchedness, and helplessness, were all at work together in Jonah’s troubled

mind; so that when he spake these words he uttered them full of anguish of spirit. And that which he doubtless felt to be the bitterest ingredient of all, was, the conviction of that great truth which the Lord afterwards spake by Jeremiah (Jer. 2:17): "Hast thou not procured this to thyself in that thou hast forsaken the Lord?"

Whatever exercises the soul may have to pass through; whatever afflictions may be heaped on our head; whatever trouble the mind may be in, we must come to this, that we must justify the Lord in all his dealings with us, and say to him, "We have deserved all this, and ten thousand times more." We dare not charge God with iniquity, and say to him, "We have not merited this at thy hands." And this is the bitterness to the child of God, that he knows whatever he suffers he has justly and richly merited it all.

And now, my friends, have you ever felt this soul bitterness, and known what it is to be experimentally "cast out of God's sight"? Is this the most painful feeling that you have ever passed through? Did your natural afflictions ever equal the sorrow you have felt from this? Did temporal trials ever weigh so heavily in the balance? Whatever worldly afflictions and troubles a man may pass through, I believe this firmly in my conscience, that they are nothing compared to spiritual trials. I have passed through my share of natural trouble, but I never found any natural trouble like spiritual trouble. Spiritual sorrows, temptations, and exercises so outweigh natural troubles, that they are not to be compared with each other.

Now if you have been companions with Jonah in his despondency, you will be able to look at

II.—Jonah's faith. I think the case of Jonah approaches as near to suicide as any instance in the Scriptures. Jonah, it is true, did not throw himself overboard; but he said, "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea." He was preserved, miraculously preserved, from the damning sin of suicide. But he seems to me to have sunk into as much despondency of mind, as if he had actually leaped from the bow of the ship into the boiling waves; the difference is, he permitted himself to be thrown in by the hands of others—and

God miraculously preserved him; with these two points of difference only did he escape the fatal sin of self-murder.

But in the midst of all his despondency, we find he had faith living and working in his heart: as Hart says:

It lives and labours under load;
Though damped, it never dies.

This blessed grace of faith was not merely alive, but lively in the midst of all the burdens and exercises that lay upon it; and it was in the exercise of this living faith that he said "Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple."

God's holy temple was at Jerusalem; and this temple was typical, as I observed before on a recent occasion, of the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was not, then, to the literal temple that Jonah looked. The building of stone could not profit him, as he lay in "the belly of hell", but he looked beyond the temple to what the temple represented. He looked through the natural building to that which was set forth by it. His faith turned toward the human nature of the Lord Jesus, which was to be in due time united, indissolubly united to the Godhead, so as to form one glorious Person, "Immanuel, God with us;" the Mediator, the only Mediator between God and man.

But how did the temple represent the human nature of the Lord Jesus? First, in it God dwelt. As the Lord said, "Whoso shall swear by the temple sweareth by it, and by Him that dwelleth therein" (Matt. 23:21). It was in the temple that God dwelt, in the cloud on the mercy-seat; and so in the human nature of Jesus Christ, which is spotless and holy, does God dwell, "for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily". And secondly, every thing in the temple was connected with, and had relation to the Lord Jesus, as Mediator between God and man. The mercy-seat, sprinkled once a year with atoning blood, the holy of holies, the brazen altar on which the sacrifices were continually offered, and in a word, everything connected with the temple, had a spiritual and typical reference to the Lord of life and glory.

Jonah then, in “looking toward the holy temple”, looked to all that the temple represented. Thus, in the midst of all the sinking of his soul, and the distress of his mind, he cast a despairing yet believing look for we may conjoin the two apparently contradictory expressions towards God’s holy temple—the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, in order to do this, the eyes of his understanding must have been spiritually enlightened by the Holy Ghost. Faith must have been given to him by God himself to look toward this only Mediator; the efficacy of his atoning blood must have been seen and felt; the glory of his justifying righteousness must have been beheld; the dignity and beauty of his Person must have been divinely realized and not only must faith have flowed out toward him, but hope must have anchored on him, and love been firmly fixed upon him.

And thus, however low Jonah sank in trouble, he lost not his acquaintance with divine teachings. Did he go to Joppa? He did not lose them there. Did he fall asleep in the sides of the ship? He did not lose them there. Did the storm rage, the winds blow, and was Jonah cast into the billows? He did not lose his faith there; yea, when he was come into the very “belly of hell”, he did not lose it even there. The Lord had given him living faith; and he who first kindled the divine spark in his soul, kept it secretly alive, brought it forth into fresh exercise, and never let the holy flame expire. This living faith keeps the soul from utter despair, however low it may sink in distress and trouble. Faith, hope, and love, formerly kindled and realized in the soul, held it up from utterly sinking in the deep waters. And thus, in the midst of the soul’s despondency, and of its sharpest exercises, there is often a blessed “Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.”

Now this word “again”, shows that Jonah had looked there before; that it was not the first time his eye had been fixed by faith on the Person and work of the Mediator; and that it was not the first time his soul had received benefit from Jesus’ blessed mediation.

But what is contained in the expression “look”? There are vari-

ous kinds of looking. There is, for instance, the look of mere speculation; but that will not profit us. There is the looking by the eye of sense, as the Jews, who crucified Jesus, looked on his bleeding and agonized body; but that look did not profit their souls. There is the looking on him as revealed in the letter of God's word, a seeing the name of Jesus in the Scripture, and a reading of many texts that speak of the efficacy of his atoning blood and righteousness; but that will not profit us. All this is merely a looking after the flesh; but the Apostle says, "though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more". But the looking that profits the soul, that saves it, delivers it, and brings it out of every hole into which it may be sunk, is the look by faith.

But Jonah's look was not exactly that, It was indeed a believing look; but it was rather a longing, lingering, and almost despairing glance, that did not bring him out of the distress into which he was sunk, nor relieve him from the despondency with which he was overwhelmed. It was as though he would take one last look, as though he could not entirely sink into despair; and as if one look more would keep him from being entirely swallowed up, from being altogether a castaway. It was not then such a confident look as could deliver him out of "the belly of hell"; it was but just sufficient to bring into his heart a little support, and to keep hope and love alive in his soul.

Now, I believe many of God's people are just in that state; they have not sufficient faith to bring them out of their trouble; the Lord does not sufficiently make known the riches of his grace to burst asunder every chain and fetter in which they are entangled. He does not see good to break the neck of every temptation, and bring the soul out of the despondency in which it is lying; but he gives just sufficient faith to preserve alive his own work in the soul, and thus keeps it looking again and again toward "his holy temple". By this look strength indeed is imparted to support the soul, yet not sufficient completely to deliver it out of the exercises, temptations, and distresses that it may be burdened with.

Now "a full soul" who knows nothing of this inward experience, will not value such a look as this. To be kept on a low diet cannot suit those who would turn away from every table not spread with delicacies: and so the idea of being preserved barely alive will not suit those who know nothing of vital godliness. But when a soul is really taught the grand difference there is between faith and presumption; and the eternal and awful distinction between what a man can do for himself, and what God does in and for him; when it feels the amazing difference between what comes from God as a free gift, and what is stolen by the pilfering hands of the creature—then it begins to find that the communication of God's mercy and grace is not a thing constantly enjoyed in everyday profusion; that the table is not daily loaded with luxuries, but that the soul is kept alive from day to day, and preserved from actual starvation only by those crumbs and drops that God may be pleased to bless it with.

And, my friends, nothing but passing through a measure of soul exercises, temptations, and trials, will teach a man this lesson. There is no means so effectual naturally to teach a man what good food is, as to put him for some time on a starving system: to keep him on a low diet, to shut him up for awhile in a prison, or confine him within the walls of a workhouse. And so, spiritual hunger makes a man value gospel food, when he receives it as an answer to his prayers. When one is kept on short allowance; when God will not smile on the soul when we desire it; when he will not apply his promises when we want them; when one gets only a little here and a little there according to the Scripture definition, "line upon line, and precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little", I say, when a man is brought to this point, he begins to value and enjoy those things which before he thought little of.

Nothing, I believe, can really comfort a God-taught soul, but the consolations that God alone can bless him with; the only food that can really satisfy a living man, is the bread of life that the Holy Ghost from time to time brings down into his heart; and his heart can only be established and kept at anchor, just as the

Lord is pleased from time to time to favour him with testimonies. And these realities are very rare, while counterfeits abound. False Christs, notional religion, carnal security, may be had at every shop, and be picked up in every street; but real testimonies from God, gracious smiles of his favour, gospel food brought down from heaven, you may depend upon it, my friends, that those who know these things experimentally, will say that they are very rare indeed. It is only occasionally that the Lord bestows these favours; it is only when we have been long toiling, and can catch nothing, that we are enabled to cast our net on the right side of the ship.

And the Lord's people learn two things in this school: their own wretchedness without them, and the rarity and infrequency of them. They are unable to procure them for themselves; and yet they are unable to live comfortably and die happily without them. Thus they are brought to see that much that passes for religion is no religion at all; that much that goes for true evidences and real hopes is nothing but lying refuges; that much is palmed upon men for the teaching of the Spirit which is nothing but delusion; that vital godliness is very rare; that there are very few persons spiritually taught of God; that there are very few ministers who really preach the truth; and that Satan is thus daily deceiving thousands, and tens of thousands.

A living soul, however weak and feeble in himself, cannot be satisfied, except with God's own testimony to his heart. He cannot take up with a religion in the flesh; he cannot rest on the opinions of men, nor be deceived long by Satan's delusions. There is a principle of divine discernment in a God-taught soul. However carnal he may be, however buried in the world, he cannot rest long contented without God's blessing. If the Lord does not communicate some token and blessed testimony to his soul, he can have no solid happiness.

It is this conviction working underground, that mars all his fleshly consolation. It is this secret gnawing of conscience in a living soul that makes it dissatisfied with a religion that satisfies

thousands. If his conscience is alive in God's fear, he knows he cannot deceive God, however he may deceive himself. He knows that there will be a solemn day of reckoning, that all shall stand before that great tribunal. He would rather, therefore, suffer a thousand hells here than go to hell at last.

May we not be deceived then, for a deceived wretch is worse than any wretch. May we not be deluded by the devil, or our own hearts. And if we are brought into simplicity and godly sincerity, we never shall be deceived; God himself will not suffer it; for the work of God in a man's heart will teach him the wretched deceitfulness of everything in the creature.

And this work God keeps alive in his soul, so that however low he may sink, however he may be exercised, whatever doubts and fears he may be plunged into, he will look again towards God's temple. He cannot give it up; he cannot cast away his hope, nor throw aside his profession. He holds on, and struggles and stumbles through all to "the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul". And when the Lord, by his Spirit, lifts him out of his despondency and trouble, and brings him out of this trying path, he will see that it has been a safe path, and that the Lord has led him in it ultimately to make him a partaker of everlasting bliss.

44 THE SWEET LOATHED AND THE BITTER RELISHED

Preached on Thursday Evening, at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London

July 20th, 1843,

"The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." Prov. 27:7

In revealing the Scriptures God has seen fit to give them to us under different forms. A large portion, for instance, of the Scriptures consists of history, as the historical books of the Old Testament, and the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles of the New.

Another considerable portion of Holy Writ is revealed in the form of prophecy, as the prophetic books of the Old Testament, and the Revelation of John. Another portion is in the shape of epistles or letters, as the Epistles in the New Testament. Another portion is in the form of devotional meditations, hymns, and prayers, as is more particularly the case with the Book of Psalms, and other scattered portions of God's Word. And another shape in which God has been pleased to reveal His mind in the Scriptures is that of Proverbs, that is, short sentences, moral apothegms, under which spiritual instruction is couched. There is perhaps no book in Scripture that contains deeper wisdom and a more experimental vein of divine truth than the Book of Proverbs; and its beauty consists much in this, that under apparently mere moral sentences the deepest spiritual wisdom is taught; so that whilst the world may see in the Proverbs much to admire in a moral sense, the child of God, enlightened by the Spirit, sees much to admire and much to feel in a spiritual sense; and whilst the carnal are playing with the shell, God's people are at times privileged to feed upon the kernel. I need scarcely bring forward instances of this twofold meaning, as we can scarcely read a single verse of the book of Proverbs which does not more or less contain it. Even the text, which we shall find, I hope, with God's blessing, to contain a savoury meaning and a sweet flavour of experimental truth, has a natural as well as a spiritual signification. It is true literally that a man when full-fed loathes even the sweetest food; and it is also literally true that to one who is hungry even food which is bitter, so long as it is nutritious, is sweet.

But we need not trespass on time and patience by entering into the literal meaning of the text; that is sufficiently obvious: and therefore we pass on to consider the spiritual and experimental vein of truth that lies couched under it. And in so doing I mean, with God's blessing to break it up into two distinct portions, so as to explain, as far as the Lord shall enable me, more clearly its spiritual meaning.

“The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.”

I. Who is this “full soul?” He is one whom God has never quickened by the Holy Ghost into spiritual life, one lying still in the death of nature. But is that all? Will that be a sufficient description of what the Holy Ghost means by the expression, “a full soul?” We must add something to the definition I have already given to afford us a clear idea of the meaning of the words. It represents, then, not so much one dead in sin, as one dead in a profession; it points out not so much the carnal who make no profession whatever of religion, as those who make a pretension, and nothing but a pretension, to the possession of godliness.

But let us, with God’s blessing, enter a little into details. Generalities do not suit God’s people. They want something particular—something that shall come direct to the point—something that shall anatomize the inward man, dissect him, lay him bare, and point out what a child of God is, and what a child of God is not; so that each may have a testimony in his own conscience whether he is under the teachings of the Holy Ghost or not.

“The full soul,” then, we may define by one single expression, as “one full of self.” Self in one or other of its forms has complete possession of him; and he has never yet taken that first step which the Lord of life and glory lays down as the door of entrance into His kingdom: “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me” (Matt. 16:24). Self has never been denied, or crucified; and he is therefore full of self, because it has never received a death blow in him. But this self is such a hypocritical creature; he can wear such masks, he can assume so many forms, he can rise to such heights, he can sink to such depths, he can creep into such holes and corners, that it will not be sufficient for me to say that “a full soul is full of self,” unless I try to act the part of the police, so as to find out the felon, track him to his hiding-place, and drag him out into the light of day.

1. One form of self then is self-righteousness; and we can

scarcely believe what a subtle wretch this said self-righteousness is. There are many persons who would scorn the idea of being Pharisees, in whom the heart-core of Pharisaism never has been touched. And I believe in my heart and conscience that every man is a double-dyed and treble-distilled Pharisee, unless God has begun and is carrying on the work of grace in his heart; and perhaps the greatest Pharisees that walk abroad in the light of day are some in a Calvinistic profession of religion, who have a name to live, but in the eyes of God are dead in sin. Unless a man is taught and brought to know experimentally these two things—the law and the gospel—he must be more or less a Pharisee. If he knows nothing of a sentence of inward condemnation and death under which he falls down before the throne of the most high God a ruined wretch without hope or strength, the heart-core of Pharisaism is not yet touched in him. And if he do not know more or less of the gospel, so as to see by the eye of faith a blessed and a blessing Jesus, Pharisaism will still lurk and work within him. A man must rest upon something; and if he do not rest by faith on the blood and righteousness of the Son of God, he must rest more or less upon himself.

2. But again, “the full soul” is one also who is full of notions, doctrines, views, sentiments, and opinions; but none of which he has received from God. The deception of the human heart is past the power of man, and I might say of angels, to dissect. The depths of human hypocrisy are beyond the ken of the most keen-eyed man to scrutinize, and beyond the power of the ablest man to lay bare. Now, there are hundreds who have received from books or from ministers sound gospel doctrines; but as to receiving them from God into a broken heart and a contrite spirit, as reviving cordials for a fainting soul—of that they know absolutely nothing. But they have received the doctrines as they stand in the Word of God, or as they come from the mouths of ministers, without ever having had them, as the apostle James says, “grafted” into their hearts: “Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save

your souls" (James 1:21). The truth has not entered nor grown into a wounded heart, as the grafted scion enters and grows into the wounded stock.

3. But again, "the full soul" may also represent one who is full of presumption. My friends, of all spiritual sins (that is, sins that a spirit may commit) I believe the child of God dreads most the sin of presumption. "Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me" (Ps. 19:13). And if God has let loose His wrath against one sin more than another in the Word, it has been against presumptuous transgressions. Now a man who has no fear of God in his heart, no spiritual apprehension in his soul of the greatness, majesty, justice, and holiness of Jehovah, if he should take up religion, must necessarily be presumptuous. Under the Levitical law, if anyone entered into the Holy Place, and still more into the most Holy Place, unless he were privileged, in the one case as a priest, and in the other as high priest once a year, he would be guilty of presumption, because he was not the person whom God had appointed to enter there. And thus if a man take hold of religion, and God do not by His Spirit lead him into it, his taking hold of and laying claim to the solemn truths God has revealed in His Word is an act of presumption. And the higher he soars into the truths revealed in God's Word without the Spirit's teaching him, the greater is his presumption, and the more daring intruder he is into the sanctuary of the Most High.

4. Again, "a full soul" is one who is full of pride. And what sort of pride? Not necessarily worldly pride, but what is commonly called spiritual or religious pride. Whenever presumption lodges in a man's mind, pride is sure to be its inseparable companion. A man who has had no soul humbling sight of God, no debasing view of himself, no feeling acquaintance with the depths of the fall, no insight into his own lost, ruined condition, and who therefore knows nothing experimentally of vital godliness, must needs be a proud man; for he has had nothing to break the neck of pride within him. Nay the more religious he is without divine teaching,

the more proud he will be; and the more he is stiffened up with the form of godliness, while he denies the power thereof, the more will pride work, reign, and rule within his heart.

But we go on to consider what is said of this “full soul;” and may the Lord enable you to look into your consciences, and see whether you are the character or not.

“The full soul loatheth an honeycomb.” What is this honeycomb? Some may say, “It is Christ;” and doubtless in some sense it does signify Christ. But we may gather, I think, from another portion of God’s Word something of what is meant by this honeycomb. The Psalmist, speaking of God’s statutes, says, “Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” (Ps. 19:10). By the honeycomb, then, I understand the Word of God dropping with power and sweetness into the soul; not Christ merely, but everything that God has revealed in His blessed Word connected with Christ, and flowing out of Christ, as experimentally made known to the conscience. Should we say that the honeycomb merely represents Christ, it might justly be said that there are “full souls” who do not loathe that honeycomb. Why, there are many persons, and there may be some such here, who would not give a rush to hear a sermon, “unless,” say they, “it is full of Christ.” But what do they know really and experimentally of Christ? Theirs is a doctrinal, a notional Christ. Christ in the letter of the Word they love to hear preached; because a mere doctrinal preaching of Him touches upon no rotten places within, exposes no hypocrisy, drags to light no secret presumption, brings no painful convictions to their mind. But Christ experimentally made known—the sweetness of God’s truth distilled into the soul, the application of the Word with power, savour, dew, and unction, that the Spirit drops into the heart, just as the honey drops out of the full honeycomb—this, the very essence and marrow of vital godliness, “the full soul loatheth.” Anything but application of God’s Word to the soul by the Spirit, anything but power and savour, anything but what touches the conscience and drops into the heart as the dew

from heaven on the parched ground—anything but that for the “full soul.” As many notions, as many doctrines, as many sentiments as you please; but the real work of the Holy Ghost upon the conscience, the vital teaching of “God unto profit,” attended with melting power and a soul-dissolving effect—anything but that. “We leave all that to the poor groaners, the muck-worms, and corruptionists; that does not suit us—we want to hear about Christ.” O what a dangerous, O what a subtle devil have we to contend with! He can use the very name of Christ, and the very doctrines of Christ, all the time that he is luring by them his deceived victims to their ruin. So that a man dead in a profession, with no more grace in his heart than Satan himself, can hear and can rejoice to hear Christ doctrinally preached. But when we speak of and insist upon a conscience touched with godly fear, and a heart melted and softened by the Spirit—when the hand is firmly put upon some rotten spot within, he writhes like a serpent which you suddenly trample on in your path. And thus the very things that God’s people love, and the only thing that can satisfy them, “the honeycomb,” and the sweetness of God’s truth dropping into their hearts—the only things that can really profit, cheer, strengthen, and encourage the souls of the living family, are the very things that “the full soul loatheth.”

But how much is contained in the word “loatheth!” It does not mean merely hate; it is something stronger than hatred; it implies a turning away from with abhorrence. The word “loathe” is sometimes applied to the feelings that God’s people have of themselves, as in the passage, “Ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed” (Ezek. 20:43). When a man loathes himself, it is not merely that he hates himself; but that he looks upon himself as a vile, detestable wretch. We loathe toads; some loathe spiders; we loathe filth. Loathing, then, not merely implies hating a thing, but hating it as a thing we cannot bear to look upon.

The “full soul,” then, crammed with doctrines, sentiments,

and notions, full of pride and presumption, "loatheth the honeycomb." When he hears, for instance, an experimental ministry, what is the effect of it upon him? His secret language is, "I cannot bear this; I hate to hear a parcel of feelings spoken of; such petty preaching, such preaching of self does not suit me." Thus the "full soul" turns away with hatred and contempt from the power of truth, and from the instrument through whose lips it comes. And whilst some of God's poor, needy people, are perhaps feeding on the truth dropping with sweetness into their souls, enmity, malice, wrath, hatred, and "all uncharitableness," as the Church of England service says, rise up in his heart.

II. But we pass on to consider the other side of the question; for it is by looking at a thing in two lights that we sometimes see it more clearly.

"But to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." We have, then, a contrast here. We have seen the "full soul." We have been looking at him, analysing him, trying to pull off a few of the coverings from him, just peeping under the mask, and taking a glance at his features. Let us now look at the other side of the subject, and see what the "hungry soul" is.

We will begin with what the Lord Himself says upon this point: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Mat. 5:6).

But what is implied by the expression "hunger"? When the Holy Ghost uses natural figures, it is that we may get a spiritual meaning out of them. What then are the chief causes of hunger? Hard labour is one; short commons is another; and long intervals betwixt taking our food is a third. Take these three ideas into spiritual hunger—hard labour, short commons, and long intervals between refreshment—and, if you know these three things spiritually, I will say that you are a "hungry soul."

1. The first requisite, then, to hunger is hard labour. But what is spiritual labour? There is, first, a labouring under the law, when a man tries to be righteous in the sight of God; and that is some-

thing like a steep street not very far from this place called "Labour-in-vain Hill." There are many persons who have toiled and struggled up "Labour-in-vain Hill." And when they have about, as they thought, got to the top, they have slipped down to the bottom, and had to try to climb up it again. There is no more painful labour than to labour to establish our own righteousness. The labour of a porter at the docks is not to be compared for a moment to that of a soul labouring to work out its own righteousness. The hardest manual labour that a man can undergo is nothing compared to the labour of a poor soul to "do its duty," and to work out its salvation, that God may look upon it with satisfaction. And why so? Why, when the labourer at the end of the day looks at his work, he sees that he has done something. He has ploughed so many furrows; he has threshed so many bushels of corn; he has raised up so many bales by the crane; he has carried so many loads on his back. He has something to look at as done. But when the poor child of God, working at the law, looks at what he has done, he finds not only that he has done nothing, but that he has been undoing all that he had been trying to do. Instead of getting forward, he has only been going backward; and so he has not only lost all his labour, but at the end of the day he is further from the place for which he set out than he was in the morning. No manual labour therefore can ever be compared to the labour of a soul trying to establish its own righteousness.

Again, there is labouring under sharp and painful temptations; and this is labour indeed. Labour naturally will bring the sweat to a man's brow; and labour spiritually will send the sweat through the pores of a man's skin. To have the devil tempting a man to all manner of infidelity, to all horrible blasphemy, all foul obscenity, all vile sensuality,—continually harassing the attention, and suggesting all manner of filthy abominations to a man's mind—this is labour; and if this does not force the sweat through a man's skin, not all the hard manual labour in the world can do it.

There is also a labouring under trials and afflictions, under

burdens put upon a man's shoulders, under difficulty of circumstances, with a distressed family and children; all these things, when they come upon a man, make him labour. Talk of labouring for the good of others; talk of the labour of Bible societies and missionary societies—it is all play, compared to the labour of a soul exercised with afflictions and temptations.

2. But I hinted that there is another thing which makes a man very hungry, and that is short commons; when he could eat a good piece of a loaf, to have only just a quarter or an eighth of what he could consume. Short commons, then, will make and keep a man hungry; and I believe that God's people are, for the most part, kept on very short commons. They are not, for the most part, turned into rich pastures, where they can feed and lie down at ease; but they have a nibble here and a nibble there. Real spiritual blessings, depend upon it, my friends, are very rare. If you listen indeed to what people say at the doors of chapels and elsewhere, you would think that God showered down blessings as thick as hail, or drops of rain in a thunderstorm. But you must not always attend to what people say at the doors of chapels—where one cries, "What a blessed man is this!" and another, "What a blessed man is that!" and a third, "What a precious sermon we have had to-day!" If you believed all this chit-chat, you would think that gospel blessings were rained down from on high; but God's true children know that they are very rare indeed. I have heard that a good man once said, "If he could get six crumbs in his life, and go to heaven at last, it was as much as he could expect." Not six loaves, mind you, but six crumbs. Now this man had been taught the difference between real blessings and mock blessings. And I believe when one comes to know the difference between nature and grace, between what God gives to man and what man steals for himself—when a man's eyes are thus opened to see and feel what are real blessings, he begins to feel how few they are. Why, there are some people who if they hear a minister preach, can carry away pretty well the whole of his sermon; can tell how it was divided, and how

the subject was treated; and will go home chattering to everybody about it. While perhaps some of God's poor broken-hearted children all the time they were listening to it, had the devil pouring all manner of filth into their minds, and setting all sorts of worldly schemes before them. Or if they have just got a few words to touch their consciences, or a little drop of divine comfort in their hearts, they have to live upon it for weeks. Such is the difference between reality and imitation; such is the difference between what nature can furnish, and the real work of the Holy Ghost in the soul. Now, when you go home to-night, take—if the Lord shall enable you—a solemn review of how many times the Lord has blessed you in your lives—how many times you can solemnly say, “God blessed my soul at this time and at that;” and if you can count half a dozen conspicuous times when God signally blessed your soul, and made it like a watered garden, you are a highly favoured man indeed. I do not mean to say that there may not have been sips and drops, a little nibble here and there, and that your soul may not have been sensibly encouraged and kept alive; but if you examine how many conspicuous blessings there were, and sum up the number of times that the God of Israel has visited, watered, comforted, and blessed your soul, I believe that, if God has made you honest, you will find the fingers of one or two hands will suffice to count them.

3. And this leads me to the third thing that makes a man hungry, and that is, long intervals between taking food—not five meals a day, breakfast, luncheon, dinner, tea, and supper. God's people are not like turtle-fed Aldermen, revelling and rioting on all the delicacies and luxuries of the season; but what they get is given at very long intervals; not merely scanty in quantity when it does come, but coming at great and distant intervals, so that if they are blessed—really blessed—once in six months, or once a year, they are well off.

These three things, then, working together make a “hungry soul.” But to be a “hungry soul,” a man must want something. The “full soul” wants nothing; he “loatheth a honeycomb.” But the “hun-

gry soul" wants something; and what is it that he wants? He wants suitable food. Take a hungry man naturally; give him a lump of clay, a piece of chalk, or a bit of wood. Can he eat it? No; however hungry he may be, it is not food for him. He wants something to nourish and support him, something to relieve his famished appetite. So it is spiritually. (I love to run the comparisons together, for out of them we can sometimes extract that spiritual nourishment which the soul requires.) If a man is hungry, would you give him ashes? If you do, they will not feed him. There is a disease in the West Indies, which I have sometimes thought is applicable to many a spiritual sickness in England. It is called "dirt-eating;" and I will tell you what it is. The negro children, and sometimes the negro men, are afflicted with a depraved appetite; and this is continually craving after and feeding on dirt. The poor children are constantly found rolling in the dirt, and by stealth feeding upon it, and the filthiest offal they can procure. And what is the consequence? They gradually pine away and die; so that when this "dirt-eating" gets into a plantation (for the custom becomes infectious), the planter knows that unless it be stopped he will lose all the children. I think there is a good deal of this negro "dirt-eating" in the religious community—that is to say, there is a depraved appetite which loathes wholesome food, and which can feed upon everything and upon anything except the flesh and blood of God's dear Son. And what is the consequence? Why, these people must needs pine away and die. If they can feast upon offal, and eat husks and ashes; if they can feed upon anything short of the savoury flesh of the Lamb of God, they are nothing but "dirt-eaters;" and "dirt-eating" will bring them to eternal death. The children of God want nutritious food; they hunger after divine truth and consolation. Nutritious food is as needful for the "hungry soul" spiritually, as nutritious food is needful for the hungry body naturally.

But the text says, "to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." What does that mean? Does it mean that the bitter thing is sweet at the time it is eaten? I cannot think that it does. But it is

sweet after it is eaten. And the “hungry soul” so craves solid nutriment, that he can put up with a considerable measure of bitterness in his food, in order to get at the nutriment it contains. Some of us when very hungry may have had bitter bread set before us; yet we have eaten it, and we have found that the bitter bread did not disagree with our stomachs; but after we had lost the bitterness on the palate we felt refreshed by the nutriment in it. But we could not but taste at the time the bitterness: the bread itself was not sweet, but the nutriment which we afterwards got out of it was so. As the apostle says, “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” The bitter then is not converted into sweet, but there is a blessed nutriment in it which becomes sweet afterwards.

What bitter things, for instance, temptations are—temptations to unbelief, to blasphemy, to obscenity, and all the other base temptations of the devil—how bitter they are to a man’s conscience, when made tender in God’s fear! But then temptations, when they have passed away, have left a sweetness behind them; there has been a good resulting from them. They have brought the Christian out of the world; they have made him abhor himself; they have broken to pieces his former idols: they have made him to know himself to be a lost and ruined wretch before God. The man is glad he passed through them; he feels it sweet that he has been tempted, on account of the good he has got out of these exercises.

So of afflictions, trials, and sorrows; they are very bitter things. And they must needs be bitter, for God never meant that they should be otherwise. God does not deal with His children as an indulgent parent does with a spoiled child, when he just tips him with the end of the rod by a kind of make-believe, or perhaps strikes, in a fit of apparent indignation, the child’s clothes, but takes good care not to hurt him. God does not play at make believe in this way. But when He takes the rod, it is to make it felt; and when He brings trouble on His children, it is that they may smart under it. Our text

therefore, does not, I believe, mean that the “bitter thing” is sweet when it is taken; for then it would cease to be bitter; but it is sweet on account of the blessed nourishment that is brought to the soul out of it. I remember reading many years ago the travels of Franklin to the North Pole; and a very interesting book it is naturally. But there is one incident mentioned in it which just strikes my mind. In wandering over the snows of the circumpolar regions, there was no food to be got for days, and I think weeks, except a lichen or kind of moss, that grew upon the rocks, and that was so exceedingly bitter (something like “Iceland moss”) that it could only be taken with the greatest disgust; and yet upon that they lived. They had no alternative; they must either eat that or die. But that bitter moss became sweet after it had passed their palates; for it had a nutriment in it which kept their bodies alive. And thus many of God’s people who have endured the most dreadful trials, have afterwards found nutriment to spring out of them. What bitter things are God’s reproofs and rebukes in the conscience! And yet who would be without them? I appeal to you who fear God, whether you would deliberately choose never to experience marks of divine disapprobation, and never feel the frowns of God’s anger every time that you go wrong? I believe in my conscience that you whose hearts are tender in God’s fear would say, “Lord, let me have Thy frowns; for if I have not Thy frowns and a conscience to feel them, what sins should I not recklessly plunge into? Where would not my wicked nature carry me, if I had not Thy solemn reproofs!” These very rebukes then become sweet, not in themselves, nor at the time, but because of the solid profit that comes out of them.

And thus an experimental minister who pulls you down from your lofty tower, strips you and leaves you bare, and sends you home hanging down your head, and exclaiming, “O Lord, look down upon me in Thy mercy!”—such a minister may say things that are felt at the time to be very bitter; but you will afterwards find that solid good has been produced. If I were to come to Lon-

don to please even all God's people, I should have come in vain. I like to see people at times hanging down their heads, and crying to the Lord, "Am I right, or am I wrong?" I like to see some purpose effected, some hearts wounded, some secret device of Satan unmasked, that people may not go home buzzing and fluttering about like so many flies, but humbled and broken down, and if need be troubled; and that when they go to bed they may begin to roll about, and cry, "Search me, O Lord, and try me." I was at Bradford, in the north of England, a few weeks ago, and the Lord enabled me, I trust, to be a little faithful with the people there. They heard me with much attention; and I was not sorry to learn next morning that there had been among them some who had spent nearly a sleepless night. I think that was a better mark for them and for me too, than to see them flitting about on the wings of self-congratulation. It is a bitter thing, I know by experience, to roll backwards and forwards on one's bed in soul trouble and anxiety; but it is far better than to lay one's head comfortably upon the pillow, and say, "I care not what the man says; God has done this, and Christ has done that, and I am safe and secure," when the poor deluded creature has no work or witness of the Spirit in his soul. It is better to have an honest heart crying to the Lord with many groans, than to have one puffed up with self-pride and importance. To have one's religion all pulled to pieces, brought out of the secret depths of the heart, and exposed to the light of day, is a bitter thing; but you may depend upon it, that it is sweet in the end; for a man will find that there is a solid good in these dealings of God with his soul. He will find that there is a sweetness coming out of these very bitters; and thus, while "the full soul loatheth an honeycomb, to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet."

Now, which are you? A "full soul" or "a hungry soul?" Do you loathe the honeycomb? Do you dislike experimental preaching? Do you hate to have your conscience with the fingers of the minister inside it? Do you hate to have your heart probed and searched, and all your religion torn to pieces? Oh! you may depend upon

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it that if you do, you are a “full soul.” But if you are a “hungry soul,” you “hunger and thirst after righteousness.” If you hunger and thirst, you must experience painful want at times. There may be here many poor people—and it is the poor whom God has for the most part chosen to be rich in faith—there may be here many poor people, who know what it is to have a hungry belly. But does it not make you want food? So the hungry soul too has its wants. Yes, it is full of wants; and what it wants is something that God alone can supply. And the mercy is, that spiritual wants shall never be unrelieved: for the Lord has promised to feed the hungry with good things, whilst He sends the rich empty away.

45 THE HEAVENLY BIRTH AND ITS EARTHLY COUNTERFEITS

Preached on Lord’s Day Evening, at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London.

July 23rd, 1843,

“He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” John 1:11-13

Hypocrisy and self-righteousness never probably rose to such a height as at the period when the Lord of life and glory was upon earth. The besetting sin of the Jewish nation before the Babylonish captivity was idolatry, as we find recorded in the pages of the Old Testament; but after their return from that captivity more than five hundred years before Christ came into the world, they never relapsed into open idol-worship. The form of ungodliness in them was changed. The human heart, ever “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,” put on a new mask; and though they no longer bowed down to gods of wood and stone, nor went

after the vain idols of their fathers, yet they prostituted the worship of the only true God into lip-service and “bodily exercise”. And thus, though nominally worshippers of the only true God, yet they were as far from Him in their hearts, though with their lips they drew nigh, as when their forefathers bowed down before stocks and stones.

It was at this period, then, that God sent His only begotten Son into the world; and chose at this time to fulfil all those prophecies, which He before had given concerning the Messiah. Of this period the apostle John speaks in the opening of this chapter. “That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” Joh 1:9-13.

The text speaks of two entirely distinct classes of characters—those who received Christ, and those who received Him not: and it further tells us what was the happiness and blessed privilege of those who received Him into their hearts and affections as the Son of God.

I. Now, what was the reason of this difference? How came it to pass that of men born in the same nation, living in the same period of time, and placed in precisely similar circumstances, some received Christ, and others received Him not? Must we not trace it up to God’s absolute sovereignty?—that the reason why some did not receive Him was because God willed it so? And why others did receive Him was equally because God willed it so? Can we admit any other final cause of this difference than the sovereign will of God, determining rejection by one, and reception by the other.

But when we come down from looking at God’s sovereignty to view the workings of the human heart, we see that there were certain instrumental causes which operated on the minds of the

one, as there were certain instrumental causes which influenced the wills of the other. Those that “received Him not” were under the influence of certain workings. They knew nothing of divine sovereignty; they had no idea that what they said and did was according to God’s “determinate counsel” Ac 2:23. In doing what they did, they followed the bent of their own minds; and thus they were seemingly left to the exercise of their own will, whilst God really ordered every action, that it might be to His own glory.

1. One cause, then, why those who “received Him not” scornfully rejected Him, was the blindness and ignorance of their heart. And this is one cause why men still to this day reject the Lord of life and glory. As the apostle says, they were “alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” Eph 4:18. And to this the prophet alludes when he says, speaking in the name of the Jewish people, “He shall grow up... as a root out of a dry ground; He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him” Isa 53:2. When the Jews looked upon the Man of sorrows, He was not what their fancy had figured out—a conquering Messiah, who should come to deliver them from the Roman yoke. And therefore, being spiritually ignorant of His Person and work, they rejected Him, because their eyes were not opened to see the dignity of the Godhead under the veil of the suffering manhood.

2. Another reason was their self-righteousness. And this same cause operates in men’s minds now. Until self-righteousness is in a measure broken down in a man’s heart, he never can see any beauty nor comeliness in a bleeding Jesus. Being madly enamoured of his own righteousness, and not seeing it in the light of God’s countenance as “filthy rags,” Isa 64:6 he has no eyes to see, no ears to hear, no heart to receive that glorious robe of righteousness, which the Son of God wrought out, and which is imputed to all that believe on His name.

3. Another cause was the worldliness of their minds. They

were buried in the world, in the poor perishing things of time and sense. Being dead in sin, they had no spiritual faculty, whereby eternal things were perceived; no spiritual appetite, whereby heavenly food was relished; no spiritual birth, whereby they could enter into the kingdom of heaven. When Nicodemus therefore came to Jesus by night, the very first truth that the Lord laid before him was the new birth: "Except a man be born again" he can neither "see," nor "enter into the kingdom of God." Joh 3:3,5.

4. But the grand prevailing cause, after all, was unbelief. It was not the determinate purpose of God to give them faith; He left them therefore in their unbelief. Thus, having no spiritual faith to believe the testimony of God concerning His dear Son, and being left altogether to the power of unbelief, they first inwardly rejected, and then openly crucified the Lord of life and glory. The same cause operates now. When we consider Christ's miracles, we may look with astonishment upon the unbelief of the Jews; but the same unbelief reigns by nature in the hearts of all; and as long as men are blind, self-righteous, worldly, and unbelieving and they are all these until God "works in them to will and to do of His good pleasure", they will reject Jesus, and say secretly, "We will not have this Man to reign over us," Lu 19:14 just as their forefathers the Jews rejected Him openly when He stood at Pilate's tribunal.

II. But God's will was not to be frustrated; the Almighty's purposes were not to be disappointed by the almost universal rejection of Jesus by the Jews. He had from eternity "a peculiar people," who had an everlasting and indissoluble union with His dear Son. There was "a remnant according to the election of grace," Ro 11:5 who stood eternally in Christ: for whom He gave Himself, shed His precious blood, laid down His life, was entombed in the grave, rose on the third day, and now sits at God's right hand, as their Intercessor and Mediator. And thus, however far a man may be from God, however desperate his wickedness, however thick his blindness, however powerful the unbelief of his heart, yet if he is a vessel of mercy, the light and life of God's Spirit will penetrate through

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all, and bring him into a knowledge, first of his ruin, and then of those blessings which are stored up for him in his covenant Head. Though Christ “came to His own, and His own received Him not” that is not His own by election, redemption, and regeneration, but His own nation, His own property as Lord of heaven and earth, yet there was a people, who should receive Him by living faith as their Lord and their God.

III. But as we have looked at God’s sovereignty in the way of rejection, and then endeavoured to trace out the various causes by which the great mass of the Jewish nation rejected the Lord of life and glory, so will we endeavour having seen God’s sovereignty in choosing a peculiar people, to trace out also the secret causes which led some to receive Him whom the others received not.

1. The first cause, then, was the quickening life of God’s Spirit put into their souls; according to those words: “You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Eph 2:1. Until God by His Spirit quickens the soul into spiritual life, there must be a determined rejection of Christ. However a man may receive Him into his judgment, the inward bias of his heart and the secret speech of his soul is, “Not this Man, but Barabbas” John 18:40 If, then, there be any who do believe in Him, receive Him, love Him, and have a blessed union with Him, it all springs from the quickening Spirit of God, working with power in their souls.

Now this quickening work of God the Spirit upon the heart is manifested by certain fruits and evidences, which ever flow out of His blessed operations. For instance, wherever the quickening power of God’s Spirit has passed upon a man’s conscience, he is invariably brought to see and feel himself to be a sinner. This inward sight of self cuts him off sooner or later from all legal hopes, all Pharisaic righteousness, all false refuges, and all vain evidences, wherewith he may seek to prop up his soul. In many cases the work may begin in a way scarcely perceptible, and in other instances may go on very gradually, for we cannot lay down any precise standard. But I am sure of this, that the Lord will “bring

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down the hearts” of all His people “with labour;” will convince them all of their lost state before Him, and cast them as ruined wretches into the dust of death—without hope, strength, wisdom, help, or righteousness, save that which is given to them, as a free gift, by distinguishing grace.

And when the soul is brought down by the hand of God upon it to know the exceedingly heavy burden of sin, the wretchedness of the malady with which we are infected, the holiness and justice of God who cannot clear the guilty; and feels itself not only implicated in Adam’s transgression, but also condemned by actual commission of sin, it then begins to find its need of such a Saviour as God has revealed in the Scriptures. And this work of grace in the conscience, pulling down all a man’s false refuges, stripping him of every lying hope, and thrusting him down into self-abasement and self-abhorrence, is indispensable to a true reception of Christ. Whatever a man may have learned in his head, or however far he may be informed in his judgment, he never will receive Christ spiritually into his heart and affections, until he has been broken down by the hand of God in his soul to be a ruined wretch.

2. We cannot indeed tell how long a man may be in coming here; some may be weeks, others may be months, and some may be years; but when he is effectually brought here, the Lord is pleased, for the most part, to open up to his astonished view, and to bring into his soul some saving knowledge of the Lord of life and glory. And this He does in various ways, for we cannot “limit the Holy One of Israel;” Ps 78:41 sometimes by a secret light cast into the mind; sometimes by the application of a passage of Scripture with power; sometimes alone in the secret chamber; sometimes under the preached Word. In various ways, as God is pleased Himself to choose, He casts into the mind a light, and He brings into the heart a power, whereby the glorious Person of Christ, His atoning blood, dying love, finished work, and justifying righteousness, are looked upon by spiritual eyes, touched by spiritual hands, and received into a spiritual and believing heart.

3. But wherever faith is given to the soul thus "to receive" Christ, there will be mingled with this faith, and blessedly accompanying it, love to the Lord of life and glory; and sometimes we may know the existence of faith when we cannot see it, by discerning the secret workings and actings of love towards that Saviour, in whom God has enabled us to believe. There will be from time to time, in living souls, a flowing forth of affection towards Jesus. From time to time He gives the soul a glimpse of His Person: He shows Himself, as the Scripture speaks, "through the lattice" So 2:9, passing, perhaps, hastily by, but giving such a transient glimpse of the beauty of His Person, the excellency of His finished work, dying love, and atoning blood as ravishes the heart, and secretly draws forth the affections of the soul, so that there is a following hard after Him, and a going out of the desires of the soul towards Him.

Thus, sometimes as we lie upon our bed, as we are engaged in our business, as we are occupied in our several pursuits of life; or at other times under the Word, or reading the Scriptures, the Lord is pleased secretly to work in the heart, and there is a melting down at the feet of Jesus, or a secret, soft, gentle going forth of love and affection towards Him, whereby the soul prefers Him before thousands of gold and silver, and desires nothing so much as the inward manifestations of His love, grace, and blood.

And thus a living soul "receives" Christ; not merely as driven by necessity, but also as drawn by affection. He does not receive Christ merely as a way of escape from "the wrath to come," merely as something to save a soul from "the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched," but mingled with necessity, sweetly and powerfully combined with it, and intimately and intricately working with it, there is the flowing forth of genuine affection and undissembled love, that goes out to Him as the only object really worthy our heart's affection, our spirit's worship, and our soul's desire. And we cannot say that less than this comes up to the meaning of the Scripture expression—"to receive Christ." If we cannot, then, trace out in our hearts more or less of this work, which I have

attempted feebly to describe, we cannot yet be said spiritually to have “received Christ.”

This is a very different thing from receiving Him into our judgment, or into our understanding in a doctrinal manner. To receive Him in the depths of a broken heart, as the only Saviour for our guilty soul, as our only hope for eternity, as the only Lord of our heart’s worship, and the only object of our pure affection; so that in secret, when no eye sees but the eye of God, and only the ear of Jehovah hears the pantings of our pleading heart, there is the breathing out of the spirit after the enjoyment of His love, grace, and blood—to know and feel this stamps a man to have “received” Christ into his heart by faith.

IV. But in the words of the text we read of a peculiar privilege, a sacred blessing, which is connected with and attached to the receiving of Christ. And perhaps you have been struck sometimes with the words: “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” Did the word become never strike you as a singular word? Does it not intimate a further step? Does it not clearly imply that to “receive Christ,” and to “become a son of God” are two distinct things, and that one precedes the other?

It is so. For it is only to those who “receive Christ,” that the “power” or “the privilege,” as we read in the margin, is given, “to become sons of God.”

What then is it to “become a son of God?” For it is evidently not the same thing as “receiving Christ,” but a step that follows on after receiving Christ; a privilege given to and reserved for those who do spiritually “receive Him.” To “become a son of God” is to become so experimentally; to receive the Spirit of adoption, whereby the soul cries. “Abba, Father;” to have that love which “casteth out all fear that hath torment;” and not merely to receive Christ as our hope of salvation from eternal perdition, but to be enabled by the witness and work of the Spirit in the soul to enjoy that relationship.

V. But in speaking of these “sons of God,” the apostle describes

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them negatively as well as positively; he tells us what they are not, and he tells us what they are. And it is by contrasting what they are not with what they are, that we may arrive at some spiritual knowledge of their real character and position.

1. Those then that have “received Christ,” and by receiving Christ have “become the sons of God” manifestively, are said “not to have been born of blood.” The Jews, we know, laid great stress upon their lineal descent from Abraham. “We be Abraham’s seed,” they said to the Lord on one occasion, “and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free?” “Art Thou greater,” asked they, “than our father Abraham?” Joh 8:33 Joh 8:53. Their lineal descent from Abraham was the ground of their hope; and they believed that, being his children, they were interested in all the promises which were made to him. They saw no distinction betwixt the children of Abraham literally and the children of Abraham spiritually; and those promises which were made to the spiritual seed of Abraham, as “the father of all them that believe” Ro 4:11, they appropriated to themselves as his lineal and literal descendants. Now the apostle in the text demolishes that false idea, cuts from under their feet the ground on which their vain hopes rested, and declares that those who are so highly favoured as to “become the sons of God” had something more than being “born of blood.”

If you look at the word “born,” it implies some change. Birth is a transition from a state of almost non-existence into existence—a coming from darkness to light. When the apostle then says of them, that they were “born not of blood,” he implies that a change of some kind might take place, analogous to the natural birth, and yet not be such a change as makes a man become a child of God. Is there not such a false birth frequently now? Are there not what are called “pious children of pious parents?” And could you trace their religion to the very source and run it up to its first origin, you would find that it had no better beginning than parental piety; that the religious father taught religion to his child, and by

dint of admonition and instruction made him just as religious as himself. So that a change may have taken place; seriousness may have taken the place of trifling, religious books may have been taken up instead of novels, and hymns be sung instead of songs; but after all, the change is a mere birth "of blood." There has been no spiritual change, no almighty work of the Holy Ghost in the soul; but the religion has been handed down from parent to child, and stands upon no better footing than a mother's instruction or a father's tuition. Those who were "born of God" had something better than this to stand upon.

2. But the apostle, in tracing out the character of those who were "the sons of God," brings forward another imitation of a spiritual birth; he says they were not born "of the will of the flesh." Has "the flesh," then, a will to be religious? Aye, surely; we have a religious "old man," as well as an irreligious "old man." Nature is not confined to one garb; she wears many masks, and can put on various appearances. Thus there is a will in man—at least in many men—to be religious, and, if possible, save themselves. But those who were "born of God," and had "power given to them to become the sons of God," had experienced a deeper, higher, because a spiritual and supernatural work upon their consciences, than any such birth "after the will of the flesh."

The flesh, however high it may rise, can never rise above itself. It begins in hypocrisy, it goes on in hypocrisy, and it never can end but in hypocrisy. Whatever various shapes it puts on—and it may wear the highest Calvinistic garb, as well as assume the lowest Arminian dress—a fleshly religion never can rise above itself. There is no brokenness of heart, no contrition of spirit, no godly sorrow, no genuine humility, no living faith, no spiritual hope, no heavenly love, "shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost," in those that are "born after the will of the flesh." No abasing views of self, no tender feelings of reverence towards God, no filial fear of His great name, no melting of heart, no softening of spirit, no deadness to the world, no sweet communion with the Lord of life and glory,

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ever dwelt in their breasts. The flesh, with all its workings, and all its subtle deceit and hypocrisy, never sank so low as self-aborrence and godly sorrow, and never mounted so high as into communion with the Three-One God. The depth of the one is too deep, and the height of the other too high for any but those who are “born of God.”

3. We read, however, in the text, of another birth still, which is, “of the will of man.” Man then it appears has a will to become religious; and as the birth according to “the will of the flesh” pointed out a religion taken up by ourselves, so the birth after “the will of man” shadows forth a religion put upon us by others. And to what does the great mass of the religion of the present day amount? If we gauge it by the scriptural standard, if we look at it with a spiritual eye, if we examine it in its beatings God-ward, what must we say of the vast bulk of religion current in this professing day? Must we not say that it is according to “the will of man?” Eloquent exhortations to “flee from the wrath to come,” thundering denunciations of God’s vengeance against the world, working upon the natural feelings, wooing men into a profession of religion, drawing into churches boys and girls just out of the Sunday school, and persuading all from infancy to grey-hairs to become religious—this is the way in which is brought about the birth after “the will of man.” And what is the end of it all? It leaves the soul under “the wrath to come.” There is in all this religion no deliverance from the law, no pardon of sin, no separation from the world, no salvation from death and hell. These various births, be they “of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man,” leave a man just where they found him—dead in sin, destitute of the fear of God, and utterly ignorant of that divine teaching, which alone can save his soul from eternal wrath.

But those who were so highly privileged and so spiritually blessed as to “receive Christ,” and by receiving Christ to “become the sons of God,” were partakers of another birth than these false ones, and had received another teaching, another gospel, and an-

other Jesus. And these, and these only, were "born of God." The Lord Himself had quickened their souls, and brought them out of nature's darkness into His own marvellous light; the Lord Himself, by His secret work upon their consciences, had cast them down and lifted them up, had brought them to the birth and had also brought them forth; and thus they were "born of God," and had received the kingdom of God with power into their hearts, so as to become "new creatures," and to "pass from death unto life."

We see then the steps that the Spirit of God has here been pleased to trace out. We see that He has drawn a separating line betwixt those who had nothing but nature, and those who had something more than nature—even the grace and Spirit of God; and we see that the Lord with decisive hand sets aside every profession but that which springs out of His own divine teaching; and will have no subjects of His sceptre and no inmates of His kingdom but those in whose hearts He Himself has begun, and is carrying on His own "work of faith with power."

Now I believe that for the most part, those who have nothing else but a birth "of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man," have no doubts nor fears, no strong exercises nor sharp temptations as to their eternal state before God: whilst, on the other hand, those whom the Lord is teaching by the blessed Spirit, are often tried and exercised in their minds whether the feelings which they from time to time inwardly experience spring from a real work of God upon their souls, or whether they are mere counterfeits and imitations of a work of grace.

Thus, in God's mysterious providence, those who have every reason to fear have for the most part no fear at all, and those who have no reason whatever to fear, but stand complete in Christ, the objects of God's eternal love, and the sheep for whom Jesus died, are the only persons who are plagued and pestered with the fears that spring from their own unbelieving hearts, and the temptations with which Satan is continually distressing their minds. It is the object of Satan to keep those secure who are safe in his hands; nor

does God see fit to disturb their quiet. He has no purpose of mercy towards them; they are not subjects of His kingdom: they are not objects of His love. He therefore leaves them carnally secure; in a dream, from which they will not awake till God “despises their image” Ps 73:20.

But on the other hand, where Satan perceives a work of grace going on; where he sees the eyes sometimes filled with tears, where he hears the sobs heaving from the contrite heart, where he observes the knees often bent in secret prayer, where his listening ear often hears the poor penitent confess his sins, weaknesses, and backslidings before God for by these observations, we have reason to believe, Satan gains his intelligence, wherever he sees this secret work going on in the soul, mad with wrath and filled with malice, he vents his hellish spleen against the objects of God’s love. Sometimes he tries to ensnare them into sin, sometimes to harass them with temptation, sometimes to stir up their wicked heart into desperate rebellion, sometimes to work upon their natural infidelity, and sometimes to plague them with many groundless doubts and fears as to their reality and sincerity before a heart-searching God.

So that whilst those who have no work of grace upon their hearts at all are left secure, and free from doubt and fear, those in whom God is at work are exercised and troubled in their minds, and often cannot really believe that they are the people in whom God takes delight. The depths of human hypocrisy, the awful lengths to which profession may go, the deceit of the carnal heart, the snares spread for the unwary feet, the fearful danger of being deceived at the last—these traps and pitfalls are not objects of anxiety to those dead in sin. As long as they can pacify natural conscience, and do something to soothe any transient conviction, they are glad to be deceived.

But, on the other hand, he that has a conscience tender in God’s fear knows what an awful thing it is to be a hypocrite before God, to have “a lie in his right hand,” and be deluded by the prince of darkness; and therefore, until God Himself assures him

with His own blessed lips, speaks with power to his conscience, and establishes him in a blessed assurance of his interest in Christ by “shedding abroad His love in his heart,” he must be exercised and tried in his mind, he must have these various tossings to and fro, for this simple reason—because he cannot rest satisfied except in the personal manifestations of the mercy of God.

In this congregation, doubtless, there are living souls who are thus exercised. When you feel how carnal you have been—and how often are you carnal!—how your mind has been buried in the things of time and sense, how little prayer has been flowing out of your heart, how eternal things have been hid from your view—when you awake as out of a dream, and find all your evidences beclouded, and all your past experience covered with a thick veil of darkness, then these painful fears begin to rise in your mind—lest with all your profession you should be deceived at the last.

But what do you under such circumstances? Do you fly to man? No; for you are taught to see that “miserable comforters are ye all” Job 16:2. Do you fly back to past experiences? As you endeavour to pursue them, they more and more recede from your view. Do you endeavour to gather up your former comforts? They slip out of your fingers, and you have no solid grasp of them. Do you go to ministers, that they may speak a flattering word? If they do speak to you words of encouragement, you cannot receive it. And thus, driven out of all creature hopes, your whole refuge and sole resource is the Lord Himself. To Him you go with a contrite heart, with a troubled mind, with an exercised soul; at His feet you bend with holy reverence, and cast yourself as a poor guilty wretch at His footstool. And when, in sweet and blessed answer to the cry of your soul, He drops in a word to raise up your drooping spirit, then you receive that which no human hand could minister; you have a balm which no human physician could give; and your soul for a time feels satisfied with a sense and testimony of the Lord’s goodness.

Shall we quarrel, then, with these doubts and exercises, these

temptations and trials, these assaults from Satan, these workings up of inward corruption, when they are, in God's mercy and in God's providence, such blessed helpers? If they drive us to a throne of grace to receive answers of mercy there; if by them we are brought out of lying refuges; if by them all false hopes are stripped off from us; if by them we are made honest and sincere before God; if by them we turn away from all human help, and come wholly and solely to the Lord that He alone may speak peace to us, and bless us; shall we quarrel with these things, which are—if I may use the expression—such friendly enemies, that are so outwitted, that are so—in God's divine alembic—changed from curses into blessings, that in God's overruling providence are made so mysteriously to work for our good?

Shall we not rather bless God for every exercise that brings us to His footstool? for every temptation that has stripped away creature-righteousness; for every blow that has cut us off from the world; for every affliction that has embittered the things of time and sense; for everything, however painful to the flesh, which has brought us nearer to Himself, and made us feel more love towards Him, and more desire after Him? Sure I am, that when we sum up God's mercies, we must include in the number, things painful to the flesh, and which at one time we could only look upon as miseries; nay, in summing up the rich total, we must catalogue in the list every pang of guilt, every stroke of conviction, every agonizing doubt, every painful fear, every secret temptation, everything that has most disturbed us.

And could we among God's mercies assign a more prominent place to one than to another, we should give the most distinguished to the deepest trial. We should say—"Of all mercies, next to manifested mercies for we must put them at the head of the list, the greatest have been troubles, trials, exercises, and temptations; for we now see that their blessed effect has been to cut us clean out of fleshly religion, and out of those delusions which, had we continued in them, would have been our destruction, and thus

eventually to bring us into nearer union, and to more sweet and special communion with God Himself”

God leads all His people “forth by the right way;” but the right way is to them as God leads them, a mysterious one, for He “brings the blind by a way that they knew not” Isa 42:16. Could you and I, by the eye of faith, retrace the whole path that God has been pleased to lead us in, from the time He was pleased to quicken our souls, or I might go further back than that—from the time that we came into existence; could we accurately and believingly trace out all the path, we should come to this sweet conclusion in our minds: It has all been a path of undeserved and unmingled mercy; His dealings with us, however painful they may have been, yet have all guided us “by the right way, that we might go to a city of habitation” Ps 107:7.

And what is our present condition? Some of us perhaps are passing through severe trials, walking in “darkness that may be felt,” labouring under heavy burdens, and not seeing the sun behind the cloud. But may we not judge from the past, what is the use of the present, and what will be the issue of the future? Has the Lord ever disappointed your expectations? Has He ever been to you less than you have hoped, or other than you wished? Oh that the Lord would enable each of us to trust Him even now! However dark the path He may call us to walk in, may the Lord give us this blessed confidence, that He is still leading us, still guiding us, and will lead us and guide us, until He brings us to “see Him as He is,” to enjoy His presence, and to sit down in His glorious and eternal kingdom.

46 THE SPIRITUAL CHASE

Preached on Thursday Evening, at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London

July 27th, 1843

"My soul followeth hard after Thee: Thy right hand upholdeth me." Psalm 63:8

Did the question ever arise in your mind, how David composed the Psalms? Of course, the answer would be, "He composed them by divine inspiration." But that is not my meaning. We will put the question in another form. Do you suppose that David wrote his psalms, as the college clergy and Dissenting academics prepare their sermons on a Saturday evening; that is, that he sat down with his pen in his hand, for the express purpose of composing a psalm? I think not. I believe that David composed his psalms in this way. The Lord led him into some experience, it might have been a mournful, or it might have been a joyful one; He might plunge him into some depths, or He might raise him up to some heights; but whichever it was, the Spirit filled his soul with some deep feelings, and when these had begun to ferment, so to speak, in the Psalmist's soul, he straightway gave them utterance; as he himself says, "While I was musing, the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue" (Ps. 39:3). Thus he seized his pen, and as the Lord the Spirit brought the thoughts into his mind, and dictated the words, he penned them down. Now that will account for this circumstance, that in David's Psalms notes of mourning are so intermingled with strains of rejoicing; that he is sometimes crying after an absent God, and sometimes enjoying a present Lord; sometimes overwhelmed in the deep waters, and at other times standing on a rock, singing the high praises of his God. And being written in this way, they have become such a manual of Christian experience. The feelings flowing out of a heaven-taught heart, and the words being dictated by the Holy Ghost, they suit the experience of all Christians, more or less, at all times. Would we, then, know whether the same God that taught David is teaching us, we have only to compare our experience with that of David, as recorded in the Psalms; and then, when laying it side by side with his, we find it to agree, we may, if the Lord the Spirit shine into

our heart, gather up some testimony that we are under the same teaching as that highly-favoured man of God enjoyed in his soul.

In the words of the text we find David describing his soul as being engaged in a divine pursuit; he says, "My soul followeth hard after Thee;" and yet that pursuit was not free from difficulties, but one which required all the support of God; he therefore adds, "Thy right hand upholdeth me."

I. We will look then, first, at the pursuit of David's soul after God; and let us see if you and I can trace out in our hearts any similar pursuit from time to time going on within.

Pursuit implies want; that the soul engaged in it is seeking to overtake and obtain some object. Spiritual want, then, lies at the foundation of spiritual pursuit. Were there no object to obtain, there would be no purpose in the pursuit. Thus spiritual want is the key which unlocks the text, and is the root of the experience contained in it. But whence comes spiritual want? It arises from the quickening work of the Spirit in the soul. Until we are divinely enlightened to see, and spiritually quickened to feel our lost, ruined state, we are satisfied with the things of time and sense; our hearts are in the world; our affections are fixed on the poor perishing vanities that must quickly pass away; and there is not one spiritual longing or heavenly craving in the soul. But when the Lord sends light and life into the conscience, to show us to ourselves in our true colours, and as the Psalmist says, to "see light in God's light," then spiritual wants immediately commence. The eyes of the understanding are spiritually enlightened to see God, and the heart is divinely quickened to feel that He alone can relieve the wants that the soul labours under; and thus there is set before the eyes of the mind, not merely certain objects of anxious pursuit, but the Person also, who alone can give us that which the soul craves to enjoy. "My soul followeth hard after Thee."

But what does it follow hard after God to obtain?

1. The first thing that the soul "followeth hard after" God to obtain is, righteousness. The first teaching of the Spirit in the con-

science is to convince us of our own unrighteousness—that we are sinners in the sight of a holy God; and to make us feel that unless we have a righteousness in which we can stand accepted before a pure and a holy God, we can never see Christ in glory. Now when a man begins to feel his want of righteousness, when his sins and iniquities are opened up to him, and laid as a burden upon his conscience; when he knows that he has to do with a God that cannot be mocked, and whose justice cannot “clear the guilty,” he feels that he must have a righteousness which at present he has not, or perish in his sins. And most persons, in order to obtain this righteousness, seek it by “the works of the law.” Like the Jews of old, “being ignorant of God’s righteousness, they go about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God.” The Lord having certain purposes to answer, allows them to set off in this vain pursuit. And what success have they? What does this vain pursuit do for them? For every step which they think they have taken forward, they find that they have slipped two backward; so that instead of obtaining this righteousness, they have only found a deeper discovery of their own heart, and are more and more convinced that in themselves, that is, in their “flesh, dwelleth no good thing,” and that all their “righteousnesses are as filthy rags.”

Now when a man is brought experimentally, in the feelings of his soul, to groan under the weight and burden of sin laid upon his conscience, the Lord the Spirit, sooner or later, enlightens his eyes to see, and brings into his soul a feeling apprehension of Christ’s glorious righteousness. The reason why so many stumble at the imputed righteousness of Christ is because they have never seen their sins in the light of God’s holy law, have never felt condemned before Him, have never had the deep corruptions of their heart turned up from the bottom, so as to loathe themselves in dust and ashes. Men therefore mock and scorn at imputed righteousness, because they are so deeply enamoured with their own. But when a man is brought to stand on the brink of eternal ruin,

with but one step betwixt him and death; when he is brought to see and feel that he is nothing, and has nothing in himself but sin and guilt, then when the Lord begins to set before his eyes, and bring into his heart a feeling apprehension of Christ's glorious righteousness; when He shows him the dignity of Christ's Person, and that his righteousness is that of the God-man, he is anxious to stretch forth the hand of faith, and "lay hold of eternal life." Thus the soul "followeth hard after God," that it may obtain this righteousness, and stand accepted and complete in the Beloved.

2. Again; in following "hard after the Lord," the quickened soul followeth hard after pardon. None of God's people can live or die happily without the manifested pardon of their sins; and they cannot be satisfied without receiving it from God's own lips. It is not merely having some loose, floating ideas about it; it is not taking it up as a doctrine, or learning it from the experience of others; but every child of God must sooner or later feel the pardon of sin manifested in his conscience. And when he feels guilty and condemned, then he "followeth hard after" pardon, the manifested forgiveness of his sins, through the blood of sprinkling applied to his conscience. But if a man never knew what it was to follow hard after God, nor the many difficulties he has to press through before he can obtain it, he has never had pardon yet manifested to his soul.

3. Grace is another thing which the soul "followeth hard after" God to obtain. Grace only suits those who are altogether guilty and filthy. Grace is completely opposed to works in all its shapes and bearings. Thus no one can really want to taste the sweetness and enjoy the preciousness of manifested grace, who has not "seen an end of all perfection" in the creature, and that "God's law is exceeding broad;" and is brought to know and feel in the conscience that his good works would damn him equally with his bad works. When grace is thus opened up to the soul, when it sees that grace flows only through the Saviour's blood; that grace superabounds over all the aboundings of sin; that grace heals all backslidings,

covers all transgressions, lifts up out of darkness, pardons iniquity, and is just the very remedy for all the maladies which we groan under; when grace, in the sweetness and blessedness of it, is thus spiritually opened up, there is a following hard after it in order to lay hold of and enjoy the happy and peaceful effects of it in soul experience.

But let us look at the expression "Thee:" "My soul followeth hard after Thee." Not only does the quickened soul follow hard after the blessings which God has to give, but the great and ardent object of its pursuit is God Himself—the Giver. The Lord has made Himself in some measure manifestly known; He has discovered to the soul the dignity of His Person, with the beauty and comeliness of His countenance; and thus He has secretly drawn up the affections unto Himself, and the soul desires to know Him, and Him only. In following, then, hard after the Lord, it is that it may obtain possession of Him—that it may, as the apostle says, "win Him," that is, clasp Him in the arms of faith, and embrace Him with spiritual affection, so as to be mutually loved and embraced by Him.

Now there is something in the expression "hard," which demands a little attention. It does not say merely, "my soul followeth after Thee," but "hard after Thee," which implies the intensity of the pursuit. It is not merely a simple following, but a following with eagerness and ardour. And the expression also shows that the object sought after is very difficult to be overtaken. It is not a slothful pursuit that will attain the object desired; it is not a mere wishing after something that will bring down the desired blessing; but the pursuit in which the soul is engaged is a most intense and eager one. There is also implied in the expression that the object retires, so to speak, as we pursue it; that it is not only overtaken with great difficulty, but that the Lord, the object of the soul's pursuit, so withdraws Himself as we advance towards Him, that it requires all the intensity, and I was going to say, agony of the soul to pursue, and if possible to overtake and gain in Him all that it

longs to enjoy.

But how does the soul thus “follow hard” after the Lord? Chiefly in longings, breathings, earnest cries, and intense pantings after Him. The Psalmist has expressed this in one short sentence, and a most emphatic and beautiful one it is: “As the heart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.” He there represents the hunted stag panting and thirsting after one refreshing draught from the water-brooks; panting as David himself once panted by the well of Bethlehem, when he uttered that poignant desire, “O that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is at the gate!” Thus it is by the panting and longing of the soul after God in intense desire and vehement longings of the soul to enjoy His presence, that this “following hard” after the Lord is chiefly manifested. And God’s people know this experimentally. How many times do they stretch themselves on their beds, and pant after the Lord as though the last breath were going out of their body! How often as they are engaged in the daily pursuits of life is there a cry going up out of their heart after the Lord, pleading with Him, and telling Him that they cannot be satisfied without His manifested presence! How often, perhaps, when for some time you have felt cold and dead, a sudden spirit of grace and supplication has come into your hearts, that has vented and breathed itself forth in cries to the Lord! And thus your soul has gone forth with the most intense desire to enjoy the sweet manifestations of His Person and testimonies of His covenant love.

“My soul followeth hard after Thee.” The Lord (we would speak with reverence) does not suffer Himself at first to be overtaken. The more the soul follows after Him the more He seems to withdraw Himself, and thus He draws it more earnestly on the pursuit. He means to be overtaken in the end—it is His own blessed work in the conscience to kindle earnest desires and longings after Himself; and therefore He puts strength into the soul, and “makes the feet like hind’s feet” to run and continue the chase. But in order to whet the ardent desire, to kindle to greater intensity the rising

eagerness, the Lord will not suffer Himself to be overtaken till after a long and arduous pursuit. This is sweetly set forth in the Song of Solomon (5:2-8). We find there the Lord coming to His Bride; but she is unwilling to open to Him till "He puts His hand in by the hole of the door." She would not rise at His first knocking, and therefore He is obliged to touch her heart. But "when she opened to her Beloved, He was gone;" and no sooner does He withdraw Himself, than she pursues after Him; but she cannot find Him—He hides Himself from her view, draws her round and round the walls of the city, until at length she overtakes, and finds Him whom her soul loveth. This sweetly sets forth how the Lord draws on the longing soul after Himself. Could we immediately obtain the object of our pursuit, we should not half so much enjoy it when attained. Could we with a wish bring the Lord down into the soul, it would be but the lazy wish of the sluggard, who "desireth, and hath not." But when the Lord can only be obtained by an arduous pursuit, every faculty of the soul is engaged in panting after His manifested presence; and this was the experience of the Psalmist, when he cried, "My soul followeth hard after Thee."

II. But we observe, secondly, that there are certain obstacles and impediments in the way of this arduous pursuit; and therefore the Psalmist adds: "Thy right hand upholdeth me."

These words imply our need of divine strength, in order that the soul may not merely commence, but also be strengthened to keep up the pursuit. We soon grow faint and weary after the heart has been a little drawn forth to the Lord; and like Abraham, "when the Lord left off communing with him," we "return to our place." This strength is from time to time mysteriously communicated. Perhaps after the soul has been going forth in earnest pantings and intense longings after God's manifested presence, a deadness and coldness comes over the mind, as though we had neither a God to find, nor a heart to seek Him. In order, then, that we may not utterly faint by the way, there is a continual reviving of God's work in the soul, enabling it to follow hard after Him. And this is im-

plied in the expression, "Thy right hand upholdeth me." Just in the same way as the Lord strengthened Elijah to run before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel (1 Kings 18:46), a race he could not have performed unless the Lord had girded him with strength, so we can only "run with patience the race that is set before us," and follow hard after the Lord, as He blessedly and secretly communicates strength to our souls.

1. But unbelief will sometimes damp this arduous and anxious pursuit. Unbelief, when the power of it is felt, seems absolutely to unnerve a man's limbs, and to paralyse every spiritual faculty. When he would run, unbelief hamstringing him, so that he cannot "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Now the Lord in upholding him with His "right hand," secretly weakens the power of unbelief, by kindling and communicating faith. Thus, as his soul finds the power of unbelief sensibly weakened, and the power of faith sensibly increased, he is enabled to press anxiously on, and follow after the Lord.

2. Sometimes doubts and fears and heavy despondency lie as a burden on the soul, and keep it back from pursuing this arduous chase. Doubts whether the heart is altogether right with God; killing fears as to whether He will receive us when we draw near; painful apprehensions and suspicions as to whether our religion be God's work in the soul—these things lying as weights and burdens upon a man's soul, check and impede him in running the race set before him. The apostle therefore says, "Let us lay aside every weight" (Heb. 12:1). These weights lie heavy on the shoulders, and keep the soul from following "hard after the Lord;" nay, under these weights and burdens it would sink, did not the right hand of the Lord uphold it; but He secretly communicates strength, so that these burdens do not altogether press it down; and enables it, in spite of all its weights, to run patiently and perseveringly on.

3. But carnality, worldliness, and earthly affections will at times also damp the soul's earnest pursuit after God. Heavenly things lose their savour, spiritual affections are not sensibly felt, and the

heart grows cold Godward, and warm earthward. The Lord seems to be at a distance; the world and worldly things fill the thoughts, and almost banish spiritual feelings from the mind. The Lord, then, must again revive His work in the soul, and bring it out of this carnality, deadness, hardness, and carelessness; He must stir it up again and again into desires after Him. But directly He leaves us to ourselves, we relapse into our former carnal state. Only so long as he keeps us near Him do we overcome this wretched carnality; and when He leaves us to ourselves, our hands hang down, and we sink again into our former deadness and worldliness.

4. Sometimes presumption, vain confidence, and fleshly security act as hindrances, so that the soul is unable to follow "hard after the Lord." When this feeling of carnal security comes over a man's mind, he is not anxious about his eternal state, his soul is not looking to God; and secure of reaching "the world to come," the world present lays such fast hold on him as to bury him in its cares and pursuits, and take away his heart from following after the Lord.

All these things, then, conspire as so many hindrances; and the soul is often so encumbered and entangled by them that it is not able to follow "hard after the Lord." But God will not leave a man here; He will not suffer him to be altogether swallowed up in the things of time and sense. He stirs up his mind, and by stirring it up He more and more engages him in this pursuit after Himself.

Sometimes, for instance, He sends heavy afflictions; and when these fall upon a man they show him where he has been; they are often blessed to lay bare his secret backslidings from God; and to open up to him how he has been content with only a name to live, how he has been secure in a form of godliness, whilst his heart was not alive to God, nor eagerly pursuing after the power and savour which he once felt. When affliction, then, embitters to him the things of time and sense, he begins to look out for solid comfort, and he finds none but in the Lord, for everything else is full of labour and sorrow. But the Lord has been provoked by his

backsliding conduct to withdraw Himself, so that the soul cannot find Him, though it can find solid satisfaction nowhere else. This stirs it up only the more earnestly to follow after the Lord as the only source of true consolation.

But again. Temptations coming suddenly into the mind, and sweeping away all false evidences, removing vain hopes, and laying bare the corruptions of the heart, will often at first plunge the soul down into the depths of creature helplessness. But the Lord mysteriously works by these very temptations, that we may follow "hard after Him;" for when we are thus tempted and exercised in our minds, we want immediate relief. It is like a patient afflicted with an acute disease, or like a man with a fractured limb; he wants to send for the doctor at once, it will not do to wait till to-morrow; he must come immediately, for the case admits of no delay. And so, in the case of powerful temptations, when Satan attacks the soul with all the malice and craft of hell, it does not do to wait till tomorrow, or the day after; the relief must be immediate, the case is pressing, and the remedy must be at hand. Thus powerful temptations are overruled to make us follow "hard after God."

Sometimes the Lord lays a man on the bed of sickness, and brings death, the king of terrors, before his soul in all its ghastliness. And the heart being made honest before God, and alive in His fear, he begins to examine his religion, to overhaul his evidences, and to look back on the way in which the Lord has led him from the first. But in so doing he looks not only at the Lord's dealings with him, but how he has requited the Lord; he calls to mind his idolatries and spiritual adulteries, his continual backslidings, his vile ingratitude, with all the baseness and rebelliousness which his soul has been guilty of. All these things are brought to light in his conscience, and laid upon it; and he must now have the Lord Himself to speak peace to his soul. Death stares him in the face; his sins rise up to view in clouds, and his conscience bears testimony against him. He must now have the Lord Himself to acquit him; he must have His blood sprinkled upon his conscience; he must have

His righteousness revealed, and His love and manifested presence sensibly felt. But to obtain this, his soul "followeth hard" after the Lord. These mercies being delayed, he is made to see and feel more and more the solemn reality of his state; and under the teachings of the Spirit, he wonders how he could go dreaming on through so long a period, without panting more after the immediate presence of the Lord. Thus, through these painful exercises, his soul follows hard after the Lord, as though he would take no denial.

Now the man that thus follows hard after the Lord, knows what he wants; he is not undecided as to what vital godliness is; he is not resting on refuges that thousands shelter themselves in. He has a determinate object, and no one can put him off from that object. He cannot be flattered into a belief that he has what his conscience tells him he has not; nor is he to be persuaded that he has the enjoyment of what he wants, when all within is one mournful, solitary blank. Thus, whatever darkness of soul a living man may be plunged into, however he may be harassed through the workings of Satan's temptations, whatever he may feel of the sinfulness of his corrupt nature; and whatever carnality of mind he may seem to sink into, so as sometimes to appear to himself, or even to others, to have scarcely a spark of grace in his soul, yet in his worst state, in his darkest hours, in his most confused and self-condemning moments, the child of God, taught by the Spirit, will differ from everyone else on the face of the earth. Nothing but God can really satisfy his panting soul; nothing but the Lord's smiles, and the manifestations of His presence, can comfort his heart; and to all others he says, "Miserable comforters are ye." He can take up with no hope but what the Lord communicates to his soul, nor rest in any other testimony but that which he receives from God's own lips.

Thus the child of God, in whatever state he may be, carries certain marks which distinguish him from the dead professor of the highest doctrines, and from the lowest groveller in Arminianism. The grand distinguishing mark of a living soul is this—that

he alone either is in the enjoyment of the Lord's presence, or is panting after the manifestation of it; that he alone is either happy in God, or restless and dissatisfied without Him. I do not mean to say that a living man always feels unhappy when he is without the manifestative presence of God; for sometimes he seems to have not one spark of feeling in his heart at all, and there is no more going out after the Lord than if there were no God, no heaven, no hell, or as if we had no immortal soul to be saved or lost. Such a deathlike stupor, such a complete paralysis, such a benumbing torpor seems to creep over the soul, that it seems at times as if it were altogether dead Godward. But the Lord from time to time revives His own blessed work. In the midst of all this deathliness, He brings a secret testimony into the conscience; and thus, by the teachings of the Spirit, in the midst of all this worldliness that the soul gets buried under, and all the carnality it may be overwhelmed by, there is an inward feeling of self-condemnation. In the midst of the world, or in company perhaps, a secret groan bursts from the soul, an inward pang of self-loathing is felt on account of its carnality, and a secret desire goes forth to the Lord that He would come down into the heart, and bless it with His presence.

But there are special seasons when the soul "followeth hard after" the Lord. We are unable to produce them, and we are unable to recall them. We can no more kindle in our own soul a holy panting after God, than we can make a world. We can no more create a spiritual desire, than we can create a new sun, and fix him in the sky. We may indeed take up the Word of God, and try to peruse its pages; but we can find no comfort from it—it is all a dead letter. We may fall on our knees, and utter words; but we have no power to cause the heart to go with them. We may come to hear the word preached; and as we come through the streets, perhaps a secret sigh may go forth that the Lord would bless it to our souls; but when we have got to chapel, and are sitting to hear, Satan may come down, like a foul bird of the air, and spread his baneful and blighting wings over the soul, so as to fill it with the miserable feel-

ings that dwell in his own infernal mind. And thus we know by painful experience that it is out of our power to kindle this panting after God. But we know also, at times, that the Lord is pleased to work in us breathings after Himself. It may be, when we walk up and down our room, sit by our fireside, or are engaged in our daily labour, that our soul will be panting after the Lord; there will be a going up toward Him, and a telling Him that nothing on earth, and nothing in heaven can satisfy us but Himself. There is a secret turning away from our relations and friends, and everything else, to go only after God; and thus the renewed soul pants again and again after His manifested presence.

Now, my friends, if you know these things experimentally; if you know what it is, time after time, as the Lord works in you, to "follow hard after" Him; and yet with all your following find little else but obstacles and difficulties, feel burdens placed upon your shoulders, and impediments continually presented in your path, you have the experience of David; you are in the path which many of God's saints have trodden before you. And the Holy Ghost has left upon special record this and other parts of David's experience, for the comfort and encouragement of those who have the same Spirit, and are called to walk in the same footsteps. Thus it not only shows that the soul must have tasted something of the goodness of God, but that in thus following hard after Him, it has but one object of pursuit, but one desire to obtain.

When a man is diligently engaged, early and late, in his business, does it not show he has an object on which his heart is fixed? In whatever pursuit a man is engaged, does not his anxiety clearly show that he earnestly desires to overtake the object he pursues? When a man, then, can honestly say, "My soul followeth hard after Thee," it shows that he experiences an earnestness and intensity of pursuit after God. There is perhaps someone here who is grievously perplexed and harassed in his mind to know whether the Lord has really visited his soul; and he says, "Are my sins pardoned? Do I stand accepted in the Beloved? Am I an heir of God,

and joint-heir with Christ? Has the blessed Spirit begun a work in my soul? has He indeed quickened me into spiritual life?" There would be no following hard after the Lord, my friend, unless God had done something for thy soul; there would be no panting after His love, and desire to realise it, unless you had tasted something of it; there would be no desire to feel the efficacy of atoning blood to purge your conscience from sin, unless you had seen and felt in a measure the vileness of your sins, and had seen by faith the fountain once opened; nor would there be any longing cry and sigh to the Lord that He would reveal Himself in your soul, unless you had seen some beauty in the Lord Jesus, and felt in your heart that nothing but His presence could really content and satisfy you.

If, then, you really and experimentally know what it is, in the secret pantings of your soul, to be following hard after the Lord, let me speak this for your comfort—you are sure to overtake Him. The Lord has not kindled this panting in your soul to disappoint you; He has not made you feel your misery and wretchedness here to give you a foretaste of misery and wretchedness hereafter; He has not made you to feel out of love with your own righteousness, that you may be disappointed in receiving Christ's righteousness; but, on the contrary, when He makes you to fall out of love with yourself, it is to make you fall in love with Him. He has disappointed your false hopes only that He may implant in your soul "a good hope through grace." Your very thirst after Him, your anxious desire to overtake Him, is a pledge and a sure foretaste that you will obtain Him, and clasp Him in your arms as all your salvation and all your desire.

But if a man can go on for weeks, months, and years in a profession of religion, satisfied without the Lord's presence; without either having urgent wants, or longing to have those wants gratified; if his soul never pants after the Lord, or is never satisfied with manifestations of the Lord's favour, I would not stand in that man's religion for a thousand worlds; for however high his assurance may rise, his religion is not worth having, for it is neither life

nor power. The man who can thus go on for months without any ardent longings, earnest pantings, or fervent cries after the Lord, shows that he is dead in a profession; that he is satisfied with the mere husks, and knows not the savoury kernel; that he is content with being thought well of men, without seeking and craving after the valid testimonies and inward approbation of God in the conscience. But it is not what we think of ourselves, it is what the Lord thinks of us; “for not he that approveth himself is commended, but whom the Lord commendeth”—still less is it what others think, for their opinion, good or bad, will affect us but little. We shall not be judged by man’s opinion, but stand at the bar of God. And if He is pleased to drop in some testimony to the conscience, and assure us of our interest in the Son of His love, we shall care little either to court the smiles or to fear the frowns of men; but having tasted the riches of His grace, we shall be satisfied with it, and require nothing further for time or eternity.

47 THE SOUL’S PURSUIT AFTER GOD

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Thursday Evening,

July 27, 1843

“My soul followeth hard after thee; thy right hand upholdeth me.” Psalm 63:8

Did the question ever arise in your mind, how David composed the Psalms? Of course, the answer would be, “He composed them by divine inspiration.” But that is not my meaning. We will put the question in another form. Do you suppose that David wrote his Psalms, as the College Clergy and Dissenting Academics prepare their sermons on a Saturday evening; that is, that he sat down, with his pen in his hand, for the express purpose of composing a Psalm? I think not. I believe that David composed his Psalms in this way. The Lord led him into some experience, it

might have been a mournful, or it might have been a joyful one: he might plunge him into some depths, or he might raise him up to some heights: but which ever it was, the Spirit filled his soul with some deep feelings; and when these had begun to ferment, so to speak, in the Psalmist's soul, he straightway gave them utterance; as he himself says, "While I was musing, the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue." (Psa. 39:3.) Thus he seized his pen, and as the Lord the Spirit brought the thoughts into his mind, and dictated the words, he penned them down. Now that will account for this circumstance, that in David's Psalms notes of mourning are so intermingled with strains of rejoicing, that he is sometimes crying after an absent God, and sometimes enjoying a present Lord; sometimes overwhelmed in the deep waters, and at other times standing on a rock, singing the high praise of his God. And being written in this way, they have become such a manual of Christian experience. The feelings flowing out of a heaven-taught heart; and the words being dictated by the Holy Ghost, they suit the experience of all Christians, more or less, at all times. Would we then know whether the same God that taught David is teaching us, we have only to compare our experience with that of David as recorded in the Psalms; and then, when laying it side by side with his, we find it to agree, we may, if the Lord the Spirit shine into our heart, gather up some testimony that we are under the same teaching as that highly-favoured man of God enjoyed in his soul.

In the words of the text, we find David describing his soul as being engaged in a divine pursuit; he says, "My soul followeth hard after thee;" and yet that pursuit was not free from difficulties, but one which required all the support of God; he therefore adds, "thy right hand upholdeth me."

I.—We will look, then, first, at the pursuit of David's soul after God; and let us see if you and I can trace out in our hearts any similar pursuit from time to time going on within.

Pursuit implies want; that the soul engaged in it is seeking to overtake and obtain some object. Spiritual want, then, lies at the

foundation of spiritual pursuit. Were there no object to obtain, there would be no purpose in the pursuit. The spiritual want is the key which unlocks the text, and is the root of the experience contained in it. But whence comes spiritual want? It arises from the quickening work of the Spirit in the soul. Until we are divinely enlightened so see, and spiritually quickened to feel our lost, ruined state, we are satisfied with the things of time and sense; our hearts are in the world; our affections are fixed on the poor perishing vanities that must quickly pass away; and there is not one spiritual longing or heavenly craving in the soul. But when the Lord sends light and life into the conscience, to show us to ourselves in our true colours, and as the Psalmist says, "to see light in God's light," then spiritual wants immediately commence. The eyes of the understanding are spiritually enlightened to see God, and the heart is divinely quickened to feel that he alone can relieve the wants that the soul labours under and thus there is set before the eyes of the mind, not merely certain objects of anxious pursuit, but the Person also, who alone can give us that which the soul craves to enjoy. "My soul followeth hard after thee."

But what does it follow hard after God to obtain?—

1. The first thing that the soul "followeth hard after" God to obtain is righteousness. The first teaching of the Spirit in the conscience is to convince us of our own unrighteousness; that we are sinners in the sight of a holy God; and to make us feel that unless we have a righteousness in which we can stand accepted before a pure and a holy God, we can never see Christ in glory. Now when a man begins to feel his want of righteousness; when his sins and iniquities are opened up to him, and laid as a burden upon his conscience; when he knows that he has to do with a God that cannot be mocked, and whose justice cannot "clear the guilty," he feels that he must have a righteousness which at present he has not, or perish in his sins. And most persons, in order to obtain this righteousness, seek it by "the works of the law." Like the Jews of old; "being ignorant of God's righteousness, they go about to

establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God." The Lord having certain purposes to answer, allows them to set off in this vain pursuit. And what success have they? What does this vain pursuit do for them? For every step which they think they have taken forward, they find that they have slipped two backward; so that instead of obtaining this righteousness, they have only found a deeper discovery of their own heart, and are more and more convinced that in themselves, that is, in their "flesh, dwelleth no good thing" and that all their "righteousness are as filthy rags.

Now when a man is brought experimentally, in the feelings of his soul, to groan under the weight and burden of sin laid upon his conscience, the Lord the Spirit, sooner or later, enlightens his eyes to see and brings into his soul a feeling apprehension of Christ's glorious righteousness. The reason why so many stumble at the imputed righteousness of Christ is, because they have never seen their sins in the light of God's holy law, have never felt condemned before him, have never had the deep corruptions of their heart turned up from the bottom, so as to loathe themselves in dust and ashes. Men therefore mock and scorn at imputed righteousness, because they are so deeply enamoured with their own. But when a man is brought to stand on the brink of eternal ruin, with but one step betwixt him and death; when he is brought to see and feel that he is nothing, and has nothing in himself but sin and guilt; when the Lord begins to set before his eyes, and bring into his heart a feeling apprehension of Christ's glorious righteousness; when he shews him the dignity of Christ's person, and that his righteousness is that of the God-Man, he is anxious to stretch forth the hand of faith, and "lay hold of eternal life." Then the soul "followeth hard after" God, that it may obtain this righteousness, and stand accepted and complete in the Beloved.

2. Again. In following "hard after the Lord," the quickened soul followeth hard after pardon. None of God's people can live or die happily without the manifested pardon of their sins and they can-

not be satisfied without receiving it from God's own lips. It is not merely having some loose, floating ideas about it; it is not taking it up as a doctrine, or learning it from the experience of others; but every child of God must sooner or later feel the pardon of sin manifested in his conscience. And when he feels guilty and condemned, then he followeth hard after pardon, the manifested forgiveness of his sins, through the blood of sprinkling applied to his conscience. But if a man never knew what it was to follow hard after God, nor the many difficulties he has to press through before he can obtain it, he has never had pardon yet manifested in his soul.

3. Grace is another thing which the soul "followeth hard after" God to obtain. Grace only suits those who are altogether guilty and filthy. Grace is completely opposed to works in all its shapes and bearings. Thus no one can really want to taste the sweetness and enjoy the preciousness of manifested grace, who has not "seen an end of all perfection" in the creature, and that "God's law is exceeding broad;" and is brought to know and feel in the conscience that his good works would damn him equally with his bad works. When grace is thus opened up to the soul, when it sees that grace flows only through the Saviour's blood; that grace superabounds over all the aboundings of sin; that "grace" heals all backslidings, covers all transgressions, lifts up out of darkness, pardons iniquity, and is just the very remedy for all the maladies which we groan under; when grace, in the sweetness and blessedness of it, is thus spiritually opened up, there is a following hard after it in order to lay hold of and enjoy the happy and peaceful effects of it in soul experience.

But let us look at the expression thee: "My soul followed hard after thee." Not only does the quickened soul follow hard after the blessings which God has to give, but the great and ardent object of its pursuit is God himself, the giver. The Lord has made himself in some measure manifestly known; he has discovered to the soul the dignity of his Person, with the beauty and comeliness of his

countenance; and thus he has secretly drawn up the affections unto himself, and the soul desires to know him, and him only. In following then, hard after the Lord, it is that it may obtain possession of him, that it may, as the Apostles, says, "win him;" that is, clasp him in the arms of faith, and embrace him with spiritual affection, so as to be mutually loved and embraced by him.

Now, there is something in the expression "hard," which demands a little attention. It does not say merely, "my soul followeth after thee," but "hard after thee," which implies the intensity of the pursuit. It is not merely a simple following, but a following with eagerness and ardour. And the expression also shows that the object sought after is very difficult to be overtaken. It is not a slothful pursuit that will attain the object desired; it is not a mere wishing after something that will bring down the desired blessing; but the pursuit in which the soul is engaged is a most intense and eager one. There is also implied in the expression that the object retires, so to speak, as we pursue it; that it is not only overtaken with great difficulty, but that the Lord, the object of the soul's pursuit, so withdraws himself, as we advance towards him, that it requires all the intensity, and I was going to say, agony of the soul to pursue, and if possible to overtake and gain in him all that it longs to enjoy.

But how does the soul thus "follow hard" after the Lord? Chiefly in longings, breathings, earnest cries, and intense pantings after him. The Psalmist has expressed this in one short sentence, and a most emphatic and beautiful one it is: "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God!" He there represents the hunted stag panting and thirsting after one refreshing draught from the water-brooks: panting, as David himself once panted by the well of Bethlehem; when he uttered that poignant desire, "O that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem that is at the gate!" Thus it is by the panting and longing of the soul after God in intense desire and vehement longings of the soul to enjoy his presence, that this "following hard" after the Lord is chiefly manifested. And God's people know this experi-

mentally. How many times do they stretch themselves on their beds, and pant after the Lord, as though the last breath were going out of their body! How often as they are engaged in the daily pursuits of life is there a cry going up out of their heart after the Lord, pleading with him, and telling him that they cannot be satisfied without his manifested presence. How often perhaps, when for some time you have felt cold and dead, a sudden spirit of grace and supplication has come into your hearts, that has vented and breathed itself forth in cries to the Lord. And thus your souls has gone forth with the most intense desire to enjoy the sweet manifestations of his Person and testimonies of his covenant love.

“My soul followeth hard after thee.” The Lord (we would speak with reverence) does not suffer himself at first to be overtaken. The more the soul follows after him, the more he seems to withdraw himself, and thus he draws it more earnestly in the pursuit. He means to be overtaken in the end: it is his own blessed work in the conscience to kindle earnest desires and longings after himself; and therefore he puts strength into the soul, and “makes the feet like hind’s feet” to run and continue the chase. But in order to whet the ardent desire, to kindle to greater intensity the rising eagerness, the Lord will not suffer himself to be overtaken till after a long and arduous pursuit. This is sweetly set forth in the Song of Solomon, (5:2-8.) We find there the Lord coming to his bride; but she is unwilling to open to him till he puts his hand in by the hole of the door. She would not rise at his first knocking, and therefore he is obliged to touch her heart. But “when she opened to her Beloved, he was gone;” and no sooner does he withdraw himself, than she pursues after him; but she cannot find him; he hides himself from her view, draws her round and round the walls of the city, until at length she overtakes, and finds him whom her soul loveth. This sweetly sets forth how the Lord draws on the longing soul after himself. Could we immediately obtain the object of our pursuit, we should not half so much enjoy it when attained. Could we with a wish bring the Lord down into the soul,

it would be but the lazy wish of the sluggard, who "desireth, and hath not." But when the Lord can only be obtained by an arduous pursuit, every faculty of the soul is engaged in panting after his manifested presence; and this was the experience of the Psalmist, when he cried, "My soul followeth hard after thee."

II.—But we observe, secondly, that there are certain obstacles and impediments in the way of this arduous pursuit; and therefore the Psalmist adds, "thy right hand upholdeth me."

These words imply our need of divine strength, in order that the soul may not merely commence, but also be strengthened to keep up the pursuit. We soon grow faint and weary after the heart has been a little drawn forth to the Lord; and like Abraham, "when the Lord left off communing with him," we "return to our place." This strength is from time to time mysteriously communicated. Perhaps after the soul has been going forth in earnest pantings and intense longings after God's manifested presence, a deadness and coldness comes over the mind, as though we had neither a God to find, nor a heart to seek him. In order, then, that we may not utterly faint by the way, there is a continual reviving of God's work in the soul, enabling it to follow hard after him. And this is implied in the expression, "thy right hand upholdeth me." Just in the same way as the Lord strengthened Elijah to run before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel (1 Kings 18:46), a race he could not have performed unless the Lord had girded him with strength, so we can only "run with patience the race that is set before us," and follow hard after the Lord, as he blessedly and secretly communicates strength to our souls.

1. But unbelief will sometimes damp this arduous and anxious pursuit. Unbelief, when the power of it is felt, seems absolutely to unnerve a man's limbs, and to paralyze every spiritual faculty. When he would run, unbelief hamstring him, so that he cannot "press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Now the Lord in upholding him with his "right hand," secretly weakens the power of unbelief, by kindling and

communicating faith. Thus, as his soul finds the power of unbelief sensibly weakened, and the power of faith sensibly increased, he is enabled to press anxiously on, and follow after the Lord.

2. Sometimes doubts and fears, and heavy despondency lie as a burden on the soul, and keep it back from pursuing this arduous chase. Doubts whether the heart is altogether right with God; killing fears as to whether he will receive us when we draw near; painful apprehensions and suspicions as to whether our religion be God's word in the soul:—these things lying as weights and burdens on a man's soul, check and impede him in running the race set before him. The Apostle therefore says, "Let us lay aside every weight." (Heb. 12:1.) These weights lie heavy on the shoulders, and keep the soul from following "hard after the Lord;" nay, under these weights and burdens it would sink, did not the right hand of the Lord uphold it; but he secretly communicates strength, so that these burdens do not altogether press it down; and enables it, in spite of all its weights, to run patiently and perseveringly on.

3. But carnality, worldliness, and earthly affections will at times also damp the soul's earnest pursuit after God. Heavenly things lose their savour; spiritual affections are not sensibly felt; and the heart grows cold Godward, and warm earthward. The Lord seems to be at a distance; the world and worldly things fill the thoughts, and almost banish spiritual feelings from the mind. The Lord, then, must again revive his work in the soul, and bring it out of this carnality, deadness, hardness, and carelessness; he must stir it up again and again into desires after him. But directly he leaves us to ourselves, we relapse into our former carnal state. Only so long as he keeps us near him, do we overcome this wretched carnality; and when he leaves us to ourselves, our hands hang down, and we sink again into our former deadness and worldliness.

4. Sometimes presumption, vain confidence, and fleshly security act as hindrances, so that the soul is unable to follow "hard after the Lord." When this feeling of carnal security comes over a man's mind, he is not anxious about his eternal state, his soul is

not looking to God; and secure of reaching "the world to come," the world present lays such a fast hold on him, as to bury him in its cares and pursuits, and take away his heart from following after the Lord.

All these things, then, conspire, as so many hindrances; and the soul is often so encumbered and entangled by them, that it is not able to follow "hard after the Lord." But God will not leave a man here; he will not suffer him to be altogether swallowed up in the things of time and sense. He stirs up his mind, and by stirring it up, he more and more engages him in this pursuit after himself.

Sometimes, for instance, he sends heavy afflictions; and when these fall upon a man they show him where he has been; they are often blessed to lay bare his secret backslidings from God; and to open up to him how he has been content with only a name to live, how he has been secure in a form of godliness, whilst his heart was not alive to God, nor eagerly pursuing after the power and savour which he once felt. When affliction, then, embitters to him the things of time and sense, he begins to look out for solid comfort; and he finds none but in the Lord, for every thing else is full of labour and sorrow. But the Lord has been provoked by his backsliding conduct to withdraw himself, so that the soul cannot find him, though it can find solid satisfaction nowhere else. This stirs it up only the more earnestly to follow after the Lord as the only source of true consolation.

But again. Temptations coming suddenly into the mind, and sweeping away all false evidences, removing vain hopes, and laying bare the corruptions of the heart, will often at first plunge the soul down into the depths of creature helplessness. But the Lord mysteriously works by these very temptations, that we may follow "hard after him;" for when we are thus tempted and exercised in our minds, we want immediate relief. It is like a patient afflicted with an acute disease, or like a man with a fractured limb; he wants to send for the doctor at once: it will not do to wait till to-morrow; he must come immediately, for the case admits of no delay. And so, in

the case of powerful temptations, when Satan attacks the soul with all the malice and craft of hell, it does not do to wait till tomorrow, or the day after; the relief must be immediate; the case is pressing, and the remedy must be at hand. Thus powerful temptations are overruled to make us follow "hard after God."

Sometimes the Lord lays a man on the bed of sickness, and brings death, the king of terrors, before his soul in all his ghastliness. And the heart being made honest before God, and alive in his fear, he begins to examine his religion, to overhaul his evidences, and to look back on the way in which the Lord has led him from the first. But in so doing he looks not only at the Lord's dealings with him, but how he has requited the Lord; he calls to mind his idolatries and spiritual adulteries, his continual backslidings, his vile ingratitude, with all the baseness and rebelliousness which his soul has been guilty of. All these things are brought to light in his conscience, and laid upon it; and he must now have the Lord himself to speak peace to his soul. Death stares him in the face; his sins rise up to view in clouds; and his conscience bears testimony against him. He must now have the Lord himself to acquit him; he must have his blood sprinkled upon his conscience; he must have his righteousness revealed; and his love and manifested presence sensibly felt. But to obtain this, his soul "followeth hard" after the Lord. These mercies being delayed, he is made to see and feel more and more the solemn reality of his state; and under the teachings of the Spirit, he wonders how he could go dreaming on through so long a period, without panting more after the immediate presence of the Lord. Thus, through these painful exercises, his soul follows hard after the Lord, as though he would take no denial.

Now the man that thus follows hard after the Lord, knows what he wants; he is not undecided as to what vital godliness is; he is not resting on refuges that thousands shelter themselves in. He has a determinate object, and no one can put him off from that object. He cannot be flattered into a belief that he has what his conscience tells him he has not; nor is he to be persuaded that he has the en-

joyment of what he wants, when all within is one mournful, solitary blank. Thus, whatever darkness of soul a living man may be plunged into; however he may be harassed through the workings of Satan's temptations; whatever he may feel of the sinfulness of his corrupt nature; and whatever carnality of mind he may seem to sink into, so as sometimes to appear to himself, or even to others, to have scarcely a spark of grace in his soul, yet in his worst state, in his darkest hours, in his most confused and self-condemning moments, the child of God, taught by the Spirit, will differ from every one else on the face of the earth. Nothing but God can really satisfy his panting soul; nothing but the Lord's smiles, and the manifestations of his presence can comfort his heart; and to all others he says, "miserable comforters are ye." He can take up with no hope but what the Lord communicates to his soul; nor rest in any other testimony but that which he receives from God's own lips.

Thus, the child of God, in whatever state he may be, carries certain marks which distinguish him from the dead professor of the highest doctrine, and from the lowest groveller in Arminianism. The grand distinguishing mark of a living soul is this, that he alone either is in the enjoyment of the Lord's presence, or is panting after the manifestation of it; that he alone is either happy in God, or restless and dissatisfied without him. I do not mean to say, that a living man always feels unhappy when he is without the manifested presence of God; for sometimes he seems to have not one spark of feeling in his heart at all, and there is no more going out after the Lord than if there were no God, no heaven, no hell, or as if we had no immortal soul to be saved or lost. Such a deathlike stupor, such a complete paralysis, such a benumbing torpor seems to creep over the soul, that it seems at times as if it were altogether dead Godward. But the Lord from time to time revives his own blessed work. In the midst of all this deathliness, he brings a secret testimony into the conscience: and thus, by the teachings of the Spirit, in the midst of all this worldliness that the soul gets buried under, and all the carnality it may be overwhelmed by there is an

inward feeling of self-condemnation. In the midst of the world, or in company perhaps, a secret groan bursts from the soul, an inward pang of self-loathing is felt on account of its carnality, and a secret desire goes forth to the Lord that he would come down into the heart, and bless it with his presence.

But there are special seasons when the soul "followeth hard after" the Lord. We are unable to produce them, and we are unable to recall them. We can no more kindle in our own soul a holy panting after God, than we can make a world. We can no more create a spiritual desire, than we can create a new sun, and fix him in the sky. We may indeed take up the word of God, and try to peruse its pages; but we can find no comfort from it; it is all a dead letter. We may fall on our knees, and utter words; but we have no power to cause the heart to go with them. We may come to hear the word preached; and as we come through the streets, perhaps a secret sigh may go forth that the Lord would bless it to our souls: but when we have got to Chapel, and are sitting to hear, Satan may come down, like a foul bird of the air, and spread his baneful and blighting wings over the soul, so as to fill it with the miserable feelings that dwell in his own infernal mind. And thus we know by painful experience that it is out of our power to kindle this panting after God. But we know also, at times, that the Lord is pleased to work in us breathings after himself. It may be, when we walk up and down our room, sit by our fireside, or are engaged in our daily labour, that our soul will be panting after the Lord; there will be a going up toward him, and a telling him, that nothing on earth, and nothing in heaven can satisfy us but himself. There is a secret turning away from our relations and friends, and every thing else, to go only after God; and thus the renewed soul pants again and again after his manifested presence.

Now, my friends, if you know these things experimentally; if you know what it is, time after time, as the Lord works in you to "follow hard after" him; and yet, with all your following, find little else but obstacles and difficulties, feel burdens placed upon your

shoulders, and impediments continually presented in your path, you have the experience of David; you are in the path which many of God's saints have trod before you. And the Holy Ghost has left upon special record this, and other parts of David's experience, for the comfort and encouragement of those who have the same Spirit, and are called to walk in the same footsteps. Thus it not only shows that the soul must have tasted something of the goodness of God, but that in this following hard after him, it has but one object in pursuit, but one desire: to obtain.

When a man is diligently engaged, early and late, in his business, does it not shew he has an object on which his heart is fixed? In whatever pursuit a man is engaged, does not his anxiety clearly shew that he earnestly desires to overtake the object he pursues? When a man, then, can honestly say, "my soul followeth hard after thee," it shews that he experiences an earnestness and intensity of pursuit after God. There is perhaps some one here who is grievously perplexed and harassed in his mind to know whether the Lord has really visited his soul; and he says, Are my sins pardoned? Do I stand accepted in the Beloved? Am I an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ? Has the blessed Spirit begun a work in my soul, has he indeed quickened me into spiritual life?" There would be no following hard after the Lord, my friend, unless God had done something for thy soul; there would be no panting after his love, and desire to realize it, unless you had tasted something of it; there would be no desire to feel the efficacy of atoning blood to purge your conscience from sin, unless you had seen and felt in a measure the vileness of your sins, and had seen by faith the fountain once opened; nor would there be an longing cry and sigh to the Lord that he would reveal himself in your soul, unless you had seen some beauty in the Lord Jesus, and felt in your heart that nothing but his presence could really content and satisfy you.

If, then, you really and experimentally know what it is, in the secret pantings of your soul, to be following hard after the Lord, let me speak this for your comfort, you are sure to overtake him.

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The Lord has not kindled this panting in your soul to disappoint you; he has not made you feel your misery and wretchedness here to give you a foretaste of misery and wretchedness hereafter; he has not made you to feel out of love with your own righteousness, that you may be disappointed in receiving Christ's righteousness; but, on the contrary, when he makes you to fall out of love with yourself, it is to make you fall in love with him. He has disappointed your false hopes only that he may implant in your soul a "good hope through grace." Your very thirst after him, your anxious desire to overtake him, is a pledge and a sure foretaste that you will obtain him, and clasp him in your arms as all your salvation and all your desire.

But if a man can go on for weeks, months, and years, in a profession of religion, satisfied without the Lord's presence; without either having urgent wants, or longing to have those wants gratified; if his soul never pants after the Lord, or is never satisfied with manifestations of the Lord's favour, I would not stand in that man's religion for a thousand worlds; for however high his assurance may rise, his religion is not worth having, for it has neither life nor power. The man who can thus go on for months without any ardent longings, earnest pantings, or fervent cries after the Lord, shows that he is dead in a profession; that he is satisfied with the mere husks, and knows not the savory kernel; that he is content with being thought well of men, without seeking and craving after the valid testimonies and inward approbation of God in the conscience. But it is not what we think of ourselves, it is what the Lord thinks of us; "for not he that approveth himself is commended, but whom the Lord commendeth;" still less is it what others think, for their opinion, good or bad, will affect us but little. We shall not be judged by man's opinion, but stand at the bar of God. And if he is pleased to drop in some testimony to the conscience, and assure us of our interest in the Son of his love, we shall care little either to court the smiles or to fear the frowns of men; but having tasted the riches of his grace, we shall be satisfied with it, and require nothing

48 THE BETTER THINGS WHICH ACCOMPANY SALVATION

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's
Day Morning,
July 30, 1843

*"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and
things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."
Hebrews 6:9*

It appears, from several passages in this Epistle, that the Hebrews, to whom it was written, were suffering under severe persecutions; and not being firmly established in the faith, they manifested under the pressure of these heavy trials a wavering disposition. It is for this reason that we find the Apostle Paul intermingling in this Epistle solemn warnings and admonitions with suitable encouragements.

He felt for them as undergoing persecution; but his keen, discerning eye perceived in some of them symptoms of wavering; and this led him to speak to them in a tone of solemn admonition, such as we scarcely find in any other of his Epistles. In the sixth and tenth chapters, especially, of this Epistle, we find two most solemn warnings; and perhaps there are no two chapters in the Bible which have more tried God's people than those just mentioned.

As the text is intimately connected with the fearful warning in the sixth chapter, it will be necessary for me, as briefly as is consistent with clearness, to drop a few hints on it, before I enter on the words of the text. In so doing, I shall set out by stating it as my firm persuasion that the Holy Ghost is not speaking of the children of God in that place; but that when he is describing those whom, if they should "fall away," it is impossible "to renew again unto repentance," he means professors of religion, entirely destitute of a

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work of grace on their souls. "It is impossible," he says, "for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

If we look at the words, there certainly seems to be a very near approach to what takes place in the heart of a child of God; and yet, if we examine the passage more minutely, we find nothing said in it of a work of grace, nothing of repentance unto life, nothing of faith in Christ, nothing of hope in God's mercy, nothing of love towards the people of God; in a word, nothing of that spiritual teaching which makes a man wise unto salvation.

1. The first thing said of these awful characters, is, that they were "once enlightened." The apostle does not say they were quickened into spiritual life, regenerated, and born again; but he speaks of them as being "enlightened."

Now there are two different kinds of enlightenment; the one, spiritual and saving, such as the apostle speaks of in Eph 1:18, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling." And so David, "The entrance of thy word giveth light" (Ps. 119:130). "With thee is the fountain of light; in thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 36:9). In these passages, spiritual saving light is spoken of; what the Lord himself calls the "light of life" (John 8:12); that is, not merely light to enlighten the understanding, but life accompanying it to quicken the soul. But there is another enlightenment, and of that the apostle speaks here, the enlightening of the natural understanding; not a spiritual light, such as attends a regenerating work on the conscience, but an intellectual light, whereby the truth is perceived by the natural mind in the letter of the word.

2. "And have tasted of the heavenly gift." In the apostolic times "gifts" were communicated to the churches for the profit of the

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saints. There were gifts of healing, of tongues, of prophecy, and others such as we find mentioned in 1Co 12:8, 9. These were given for the profit of the body, and were distinct things from grace, as the apostle declares in 1Co 12:31; when, after describing these gifts, he adds, "And yet show I unto you a more excellent way," that of "charity" or love: and then he goes on to say, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal; and though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

These gifts then, are called "heavenly gifts," as being communicated from heaven for certain purposes; but are not "grace," whereby the soul is regenerated. In the exercise of these gifts a natural pleasure was found by their possessors, here called "tasting." Similarly in our day, there are gifts in prayer, gifts in preaching, gifts in conversation, gifts in interpreting and expounding the Scriptures. Now a man may have all these gifts, and yet be entirely destitute of grace; and when he exercises them, he may find a certain pleasure and delight in their use, which is called a "tasting of the heavenly gift;" and is perfectly distinct from eating the bread of life, enjoying the presence of God, and feeding by faith on the savoury meat of the gospel.

3. But it is also said, they were "made partakers of the Holy Ghost." This perhaps is one of the most stumbling expressions in the whole passage; but I think we may clear it up by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Do we not read of Saul that "the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied?" (1 Sam. 10:10). Is it not also recorded when on one occasion Saul sent messengers to take David, in two successive instances, when they came into the presence of Samuel, "the Spirit of God was upon the messengers, and they also prophesied?" (1 Sam. 19:20). Do we not read too what the Lord says, Ex 31:2, 3, "See, I have called by name Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and I have

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filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to do all the work of the tabernacle?" And did not Balaam speak by the Spirit, and prophesy wonderful things concerning the Messiah? Thus in this outward sense, a man may be "made a partaker of the Holy Ghost;" his natural understanding being illuminated, but his soul never regenerated, nor the grace of God communicated to his heart. Balaam and his ass both spake as God moved their tongues, but the rider was no more regenerated than his beast.

4. "And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." There is much in the word of God, which can be understood and relished by the natural understanding; there is in parts great eloquence, many flowers of poetry, many moving expressions, and pathetic sentiments; and all these things may have a certain effect upon the natural mind, quite independent of and distinct from any revelation or application of truth to the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost, quite different from the inward reception of truth in the heart and conscience. There may be also a natural relish for "the good word of God," and a receiving of the gospel with gladness which is meant by the expression "the world to come," where there is no peace nor joy in believing.

But the Apostle having shewn how far a man may go in a profession, and prove at last utterly destitute of vital godliness, proceeds to bring forward a word of encouragement and consolation for the people of God, who might have been tried and exercised with the solemn warning set before them. He therefore adds, in the words of the text, "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."

I.—What does he mean by these "better things?" He means graces in opposition to gifts; the work of the Spirit upon the heart and conscience, as a thing distinct from any mere profession of religion, or any mere intellectual understanding and natural reception of truth. And why are these "better things?" They are bet-

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ter, because gifts are for time, grace for eternity; gifts profit the church, grace saves the soul; gifts puff up men with pride, grace gives a single eve to the glory of God; gifts, when unaccompanied by the grace of God, harden the heart, grace melts and softens the soul, and makes it meet for "the inheritance of the saints in light": gifts leave a man where they find him, or I might rather say, unaccompanied by grace, worse than they found him for the more a man touches sacred things with unclean hands, the more hardening effect they have upon him, while grace in its communication, makes a man a new creature, and lifts him up into the eternal enjoyment of the Three-One God.

Inasmuch then, as eternity is better than time, salvation better than damnation, and heaven better than hell; so are the blessed graces and teachings of God's Spirit in the soul "better" than the highest gifts and brightest attainments which are short of the work and witness of the Holy Ghost in the heart.

II.—But the Apostle adds also, "things that accompany salvation," which he was "persuaded" those to whom he wrote were in possession of.

What then is "salvation?" In looking at salvation, we must consider it from two points of view; salvation wrought out for us, and salvation wrought out in us. Salvation was wrought out for us by the finished work of the Son of God, when he cried with expiring breath, "It is finished." The salvation of "the remnant according to the election of grace" was then completely accomplished, so that nothing could be added to, or taken from it; for "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that were sanctified;" and thus the elect stand complete in Christ, without "spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

But there is a salvation which is wrought out in us; the manifestation and application of that salvation which Jesus has wrought out by his sufferings, blood-shedding, and death: and this we can only know experimentally, so far as the blessed Spirit brings it into our hearts, and seals it there with holy unction and heavenly

savour.

But all the people of God cannot feel sure they have this salvation as an experimental reality; doubts, fears, darkness, and temptations becloud their path; Satan hurls his fiery darts into their souls; and they are unable to realize their interest in the Lord Jesus Christ and his salvation. They do not doubt whether the Lord Jesus is the Saviour of those that believe; they know that there is no other refuge for their guilty souls but the blood of the Lamb. They are effectually stripped from cleaving to a covenant of works; they are not running after things that cannot profit them, nor hiding their heads in lying refuges; from all these things they are effectually cut off, and cut out by a work of grace on their souls. But through the unbelief of their hearts, the deadness of their frames, the barrenness of their souls, and the various temptations they are exercised with, they fear they have not the marks of God's family, and are not able to realize their interest in the love and blood of the Lamb.

The Apostle, therefore, speaks of "things that accompany salvation;" that is, certain marks and signs, certain clear and indubitable tokens of the work of grace on the soul. And, speaking to the Hebrews, he says for their comfort and encouragement, "we are persuaded," whatever be your doubts and fears, whatever the darkness of your mind, however exercised with sharp and severe temptations, "we are persuaded" you are in possession of those "better things," of those "things that accompany salvation;" and that this salvation is therefore eternally yours.

Let us then with God's blessing, endeavour to trace out a few of these "better things," these "things that accompany salvation;" and shew how far better and more blessed they are than any gifts that hypocrites or mere professors may be in possession of.

1. A work of grace on the soul then, is "a better thing" than any mere gift, and is "a thing too which accompanies salvation." And what is a work of grace on the soul? It is to be quickened by the Spirit of God into spiritual life; it is to be made a new creature,

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by being brought to experience the almighty work of God on the conscience, renewing us in the spirit of our minds; and it consists in the communication of eternal life to the soul, with all its blessed consequences.

But wherever this work of grace takes place in a man's soul, there will be certain fruits and results that follow out of it. A man cannot be a partaker of the grace of God, and remain where he was before the Spirit quickened his soul; being "a new creature, old things are passed away" with him, and "all things are become new." And thus, being a new creature, and having the life of God in his soul, it will be manifested by the certain fruits that invariably spring out of it.

And I know not a surer test that this good work is begun than when the heart is made tender in God's fear. The Lord took especial notice of this mark in Josiah, when Shaphan the scribe read to him the book of the law, which Hilkiah had found in the temple, and he sent to enquire of the Lord: "Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord &c., I also have heard thee" (2 Kings 22:19). This tenderness of heart was a mark in Josiah, on which the Lord, so to speak, put his finger; it was a special token for good which God selected from all the rest, as a testimony in his favour. The heart is always tender which God has touched with his finger; this tenderness being the fruit of the impression of the Lord's hand upon the conscience.

This spiritual tenderness of heart is a very different thing from a natural conscience. Many persons mistake the movings to and fro of natural conscience for a heart made tender by the work of God's Spirit. But you may know the difference between a natural conscience, and a heart tender in God's fear by this, that the natural conscience is always superstitious and uncertain; as the Lord says, it "strains at a gnat, and swallows a camel." It is exceedingly observant of self-inflicted austerities, and very fearful of breaking through self-imposed rules; and whilst it will commit sin which a man who has the fear of God in his heart would not do for the

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world, it will stumble at mere unimportant trifles in which an enlightened soul would not feel the least scruple. It will "pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin," whilst it "omits the weightier matters of the law" (Matt. 23:23); and "will not go into Pilate's judgment-hall lest it should be defiled" (John 18:28), at the very time that it is seeking to imbrue its hands in the blood of the Saviour.

But here is the mark of a heart tender in God's fear; it moves as God the Spirit works upon it; it is like the mariner's compass, which having been once touched by the magnet, always turns toward the North; it may indeed oscillate and tremble backwards and forwards, but still it will return to the pole, and ultimately remain fixed at the point whence it was temporarily disturbed. So when the heart has been touched by the Spirit, and has been made tender in God's fear, it may for a time waver to the right hand or to the left, but it is always trembling and fluctuating till it points toward God, as the eternal centre of its happiness and holiness.

2. Godly sorrow for sin is a "better thing" than any gift which a mere professor may possess, and a thing too which invariably "accompanies salvation." Godly sorrow for sin differs much from natural conviction for sin. Powerful natural convictions, I believe, for the most part are not felt more than once or twice in a man's life; and when they have passed away, the conscience is more seared than it was before, the world more eagerly grasped, and sin more impetuously plunged into.

But godly sorrow is produced by a work of grace on the heart. The eye of faith sees sin in the light of God's countenance, and thus the soul becomes alive to its dreadful evil and horrible character. The heart too is melted down into godly sorrow by beholding the Saviour's sufferings, and viewing the Lord of life and glory as stooping and agonizing under the weight of sin, not only as imputed to him, but as pressing him down into anguish and distress. And thus, godly sorrow for sin is not a thing which a man feels once or twice in his life: but from time to time, as the Spirit works it in his heart, godly sorrow flows forth. If he has been entangled

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in sin, overcome by temptation, slidden back into the world, or his heart has gone after idols, a living soul will not pass it by as a thing of no consequence: but, sooner or later, the Spirit touches his heart, godly sorrow flows out, and his soul is melted and moved within him by feeling what a base wretch he is in the sight of a holy God.

3. A “spirit of grace and supplications” springing up in the heart from time to time, as the Lord works upon it, is a “better thing” than any gift a reprobate may be in possession of, and a thing too that “accompanies salvation.” Now there is what is called a gift in prayer, but that is a very different thing from the communications of a “spirit of grace and supplications” by God himself to the soul.

A man for instance may pray in public apparently most feelingly and movingly; he may play well on his instrument, so as to touch the passions, and work on the feelings of God’s people; yet he himself may be only “a tinkling brass,” or “sounding cymbal,” and know nothing of “a spirit of grace and supplications” in his own soul. But whenever there is a work of grace on the heart, it is always accompanied by a spirit of prayer; as the Lord says, “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications” (Zech. 12:10). And wherever it has been once poured out into a sinner’s heart, it will never leave him from the moment that God quickens his soul until that blessed day when prayer shall end in praise.

I do not mean to say, that there may not be long suspensions of it; that darkness of mind may never cover it; that coldness and iciness of heart may never freeze it up; that emptiness and barrenness of spirit may never seem to quench it: but in spite of, and in the midst of all these things, the blessed “spirit of grace and supplications” will from time to time rise up to its Source. If this spirit of grace and supplications exists in your heart, if you have not power to pray, you will have power to sigh and groan. There will be again and again some inward going out after the Lord, some panting after his presence, some expression of dissatisfaction against self, some seeking his grace, some longing and languishing after

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his manifested favour and love.

And thus, the spirit of prayer wherever once given, will from time to time be springing up in the soul. But we cannot call it forth; we may attempt it, but we shall feel powerless to produce it: yet the Lord will sometimes and perhaps at a moment when we least expect it, when we are cold, dull, stupid, and carnal, draw up the desires and breathings which he has himself implanted, and raise the soul up that it may spring upwards once more towards its eternal and heavenly fountain.

4. Brokenness of heart, and contrition of spirit, is a "better thing" than any mere gift, and a grace which "accompanies salvation." The heart that feels the burden of sin, that suffers under temptation, that groans beneath Satan's fiery assaults, that bleeds under the wounds inflicted by committed evil, is broken and contrite. This brokenness of heart and contrition of spirit, is a thing which a child of God alone can feel. However hard his heart at times may seem to be, there will be seasons of spiritual reviving; however he may seem steeled against any sense of love and mercy, or even of misery and guilt, from time to time, when he is least expecting and looking for it, there will be a breaking down of his soul before the Lord; there will be a bewailing of himself, a turning from the world to seek the Lord's favour, and a casting himself as a sinner once more on undeserved mercy. Tears will flow down his cheeks, sighs burst from his bosom, and he will lie humble at the Saviour's feet. If your soul has ever felt this, you have a "better thing" than any gift; for this brokenness of spirit is a thing that "accompanies salvation," and is a sacrifice that God will not despise (Ps. 51:17).

5. Deadness to the world, an inward separation from the things of time and sense, is a "better thing" than any mere gift, and a thing too that "accompanies salvation." I believe no one is really dead to the world but a child of God. A man may change his world who is not separated from it: he may for instance leave the profane world for the professing world; he may change from a Churchman

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to a Dissenter, from an Independent to a Baptist; he may become a member of a gospel church; he may, like Herod, do many things, and hear ministers of truth gladly. But all the time, unless he is made a partaker of “the divine nature” by a work of grace in his soul, his heart is and ever must be in the world.

The human heart must be engaged upon something; its affections must be fixed upon some object; its thoughts and desires must be occupied with one thing or other. If his heart, then, is not set Godward, if his affections are not fixed upon Christ, if his soul is not engaged on heavenly things, he may have the greatest profession of religion, but his heart is still worldly, his affections still earthly, and his soul still going out after idols. But where the Lord has really touched the conscience with his finger, and made himself precious to the soul, however a man may seem for a time to be buried in the world, and his affections going out after forbidden objects; however he may be “hewing out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water;” however he may secretly backslide from the Lord, still he cannot break the hold that eternal things have upon his heart; he cannot find real pleasure in the world, though he may often seek it; nor bury himself contentedly in its pursuits. There will be a restless dissatisfaction with the things of time and sense, an aching void, and a turning again to “the strong hold,” a seeking the Lord, who only can really satisfy the soul, and make it happy for time and eternity.

6. Faith in the Lord of life and glory; to receive him into our hearts as the Christ of God, and view him with the eye of faith as our once bleeding, suffering, and agonizing Lord, and now raised to God’s right hand as our Intercessor, Advocate, and Mediator—this is a “better thing” than any gift, and a thing too that “accompanies salvation.” This the apostle clearly points out in this chapter, where he says, “Be not slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

He had not said a word about faith in those, of whom he declares “it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance.” He

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never dropped a hint that they were partakers of this or any other grace; but when he comes to the "better things," he puts his finger immediately on living faith in the soul. This faith in the Son of God, whereby he is believed on to life eternal, received into the heart, adored by the spirit, enthroned in the affections, submitted to and embraced with every faculty of the soul, is a blessing only communicated to God's family. A faith which is lodged in the secret court of conscience, in the deep recesses of a man's heart, which views the Son of God, and receives him as all its salvation and all its desire, and hangs upon his blood and righteousness; such a faith as this is beyond the highest attainment of any gifted hypocrite, and is a "better thing" than was ever possessed by the most flourishing professor.

7. A hope in God's mercy, not the "hope of the hypocrite, that shall perish;" but what the Scriptures call "a good hope through grace;" a "hope which is as an anchor to the soul, both sure and stedfast, that entereth into that within the veil;" such a spiritual hope is a "better thing" than any mere gift, and a thing too that "accompanies salvation." We do not find that the apostle said anything about hope as dwelling in those awful characters, whom he compares to "the earth, which beareth thorns and briers, and is therefore rejected, and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." They indeed had a heavenly gift, and an enlightened understanding, and did many wonderful things; but they never had hope, "as an anchor to the soul," to keep it steady in the winds and storms. They had not on board their gallant bark this heavenly anchor, which was never known to break or fail, because its flukes take hold of the flesh of the God-Man Mediator, and its cable forms a living communication between the storm-tossed vessel and him in whom it anchors.

The hope which penetrates beyond the things of time and sense, and enters in and anchors upon a blessed Jesus, was never possessed by the most gifted professor that ever deceived himself, or ever deceived the church of God. And what is the root of this

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good hope through grace? The Lord's own work and witness in the conscience, his tokens for good, his manifested favour, enabling the soul to look to Christ as his forerunner who has entered within the veil. This hope which "maketh not ashamed" does not arise from anything in the flesh, does not hang upon the approbation of man, does not depend upon the testimony of the creature; it passes beyond all these things, and enters within the veil, into the immediate presence of God, where Jesus is sitting as Mediator and Advocate.

8. And love also is "a better thing," and a thing that "accompanies salvation." Love is the crowning point of all: as the apostle says, "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing," but "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." We do not find love mentioned in the catalogue of the "heavenly gifts." Those whom it was impossible to renew again unto repentance were not made partakers of this blessed grace.

But, on the contrary, the apostle, in speaking to the believers, says, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love" (Heb. 6:10). The other wretched apostates might have every gift, yet they were destitute of love; and being destitute of that, had not passed from death unto life. And what is love? It is a grace that changes not; one of the three heavenly sisters, and the greatest of them all; for "now abideth faith, hope, and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13). Faith will be changed into sight, and hope into fruition, but love remains the same, for "God is love."

If your soul, then, has ever known what it is to love God, and to feel the flowings out of affection towards the Lord Jesus Christ; if you have felt him precious to your soul, you have a thing that "accompanies salvation." You are not a poor miserable self-deceived professor, not a Satan-deluded wretch, that flutters for a little time in the religious world, like a moth around the evening candle, till

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at last it burns its wings, and is destroyed in the flame. But if ever the Lord Jesus Christ has been made precious to your soul, it is because you have embraced him in the arms of a living faith, as the Scripture says, "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious" (1 Pet. 2:7).

But love comprehends not only love to God, but love also to God's people. The apostle especially insists on this mark in the verses following the text. "But God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Heb. 6:10). The Apostle John, too, says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14). This is the first evidence the soul usually has of its having "passed from death unto life," that it sensibly feels a union of spirit with God's people, a drawing forth of affection to those who are manifest partakers of the grace of God.

This union with the children of God is better felt than described. There is often a sweet knitting of spirit, a blessed interweaving and interlacing of hearts, when God's people come together, and speak of the things which they have tasted, felt, and handled. The Spirit of God rests on them, and baptizes them into a blessed union with each other, so that their very souls are melted together, and they embrace each other, just as though they had but one heart and one spirit: as the Holy Ghost describes the early Christians, "they were all of one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:32). Their spirits were so fused by the heat of divine love into each other, their hearts were so intermingled, and there was such a flowing out of mutual affection, that all the company seemed to have but one heart and one soul amongst them.

Now, my friends, just see if you can realize this one evidence in your soul. You meet with a person, say, whom you have never seen before; he is, perhaps, one from whom in the pride of your heart you would turn away with disdain; he has no personal gifts, nothing whatever naturally to recommend him; or he may be a person

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against whom you have been prejudiced, and when you see him you look on him with distaste or sullen aversion. But he begins to speak; and as you listen, you feel all your prejudice give way; the bar is effectually broken down; and there is a sweet melting of your heart into his, and his into yours, and a mutual flowing forth of love to each other. Now, if your soul has ever experienced this, you are not a gifted hypocrite, though you may have gifts, but one of those whom the Lord has taught by his Spirit, and are in possession of those "better things" that "accompany salvation."

God's children fear to be deceived, and if a man have no such fear, the probability is that he is deceived already. All God's people know the deceitfulness of the human heart, and the abounding hypocrisy of their corrupt nature; they are more or less alive to the devices of Satan; and all know what a dreadful thing it is to be deluded, and have a portion with the hypocrites, where there is "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

III.—The Scriptures, then, have brought certain marks not only to test but also to comfort God's people. But in order to keep them tremblingly alive to the fear of being deceived; in order to set up an effectual beacon lest their vessel should run upon the rocks, the blessed Spirit has revealed such passages as we find in the sixth and tenth chapters of the Hebrews. They seem set up by the Spirit of God, as a lighthouse at the entrance of a harbour. Is it not so naturally? Some shoal or sandbank often lies near the entrance of the port, which the mariner has to guard against. How is he guarded? A lighthouse is erected, on or near the spot, which warns him of the shoal.

Now I look on this chapter, and the tenth, as two lighthouses, standing near the entrance of the harbour of eternal safety. And their language is, "Beware of this shoal! Take care of that sandbank! There are gifts without grace; there is profession without possession; there is form without power; there is a name to live whilst the soul is dead." The shoal naturally often lies at the very entrance of a harbour: and as the ship makes for the port, the sand-

bank lies in her very course; but when the harbour is neared, the friendly beacon not only warns her of the shoal, but also points out the safe passage into the haven. And so, spiritually, from these two chapters many of God's people have seen what shoals lie in the way, and have, perhaps, before they were warned off, come near enough to see the fragments of the shipwrecked vessels. The gallant barks that sailed from the same ports with themselves they have seen wrecked on the rocks, their freight lost, and the dead bodies and broken fragments floating on the waves. But these never looked for the lighthouse, nor saw the bank; they were intoxicated, or fast asleep; they were sure of going to heaven; and on they went, reckless and thoughtless, till the vessel struck on the shoal, and every hand on board perished.

These awful warnings and solemn admonitions seem to me so written that they may scrape, so to speak, as nearly as possible the quick of a man's flesh. And they appear couched in language of purposed ambiguity that they may be trying passages; nay, the very beauty and efficacy of them, and the real good to be wrought by them, is in their ambiguity; so that the people of God may take a more solemn warning by them, and may cry unto the Lord more earnestly that they may not be deceived.

Then, my friends, it is not the poor desponding children of God, who are tried by these passages, that have reason to fear them. Their being thus tried shows that their conscience is tender in God's fear, and that they are "the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringing forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God;" and that they are not that "which beareth thorns and briers, which is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned."

And thus, these very fears and suspicions, by which many of God's people are exercised, causing strong cries unto the Lord, that he would teach, guide, and lead them, are so many blessed marks that they are not graceless persons, but partakers of the grace of God; and at the same time prove, "that he which hath

begun a good work in them” will carry it on, and “will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ,” and bring them into the eternal enjoyment of God that they may see him for themselves, and not for another.

49 GENUINE DISCIPLESHIP

A Sermon preached on Tuesday Evening, at Jewry Street Chapel, Aldgate, on behalf of the Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society

August 1, 1843,

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:31,32

There is one feature in the Lord's ministry, when he was tabernacled here below, that has often struck my mind; and that is, the absence in him of the spirit of proselytism. He never sought to make proselytes; to allure, by concealing the difficulties of the way, the rich, the noble, or the learned to become his disciples: but he invariably set before all who professed any wish to follow him, that it was a path of tribulation, self-denial, and crucifixion in which he walked, and that they, as followers of him, must tread in the same footsteps. And, connected with this, the Lord never suffered any to deceive themselves into a belief that they were his heart-whole followers when his all-seeing eye penetrated into the insincerity that reigned in them. Judas Iscariot, you will say, was an exception. He was so; but it was to fulfil a certain purpose (John 17:12); and if Judas was an exception, though the Lord did not specially point him out with his finger, his ears were not spared the same truths which the Lord set before others, that those who followed him must take up the cross, and deny themselves.

It appears from what we read in this chapter, that there were some, if not many, who “believed in Christ,” but in whose hearts

the Holy Ghost had not wrought "the work of faith with power." (2 Thess. 1:11.) We read (John 5:30) "As he spake these words, many believed on him." There we have the express testimony of the Holy Ghost to their believing. But how did they believe? Did they "believe with the heart unto righteousness?" Did the Holy Ghost raise up in their souls "the faith of God's elect?" (Tit. 1:1.) Their words and their actions prove the contrary; for when the Lord addressed them in the faithful words of the text, their immediate answer was: "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" The pride of their hearts was immediately touched, and the viper in them started up in a moment with all its inbred venom. And the conclusion of the matter was, as you will perceive if you read the chapter, that the Lord said to these very men who "believed on him" with their heads, and not with their hearts: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." (John 8:44.) What positive proof, what indubitable evidence, that a man may believe in his head in the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet be a child of Satan, and his end be Perdition!

The Lord, then, instead of alluring these professed disciples on, set plainly before them the real state of the case: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

We have in these words, first, a test of discipleship: "If ye continue in my word."

Secondly, the genuineness of discipleship: "Then are ye my disciples indeed."

And lastly, the blessings that spring out of genuine discipleship: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

I. The Lord, when he said, "If ye continue in my word," was not laying down continuance as a condition, so much as a test. Their "continuing in the word" would not make them disciples; but would manifest them as disciples. And thus the words are to be understood. Not as though their continuing in the word

would bring them into the fold; as though then they were carnal, but if they continued to profess, nature would by some mysterious process be transmuted into grace. Such is not the meaning of the words; but it was put before them as a test of discipleship; the converse being the truth—that their not continuing in the word would prove they were not disciples.

We will then, with God's blessing, look a little at this test of discipleship: "If ye continue in my word;" and we will look at it, not so much as connected with the characters to whom it was addressed, as a test of discipleship to God's redeemed and regenerated family.

1. The word "continue" clearly points to some previous reception of truth, or to some work begun and carried on with power in the conscience. The "word," then, in which the Lord says they were to "continue" must in some degree have fastened upon their conscience, laid hold upon their heart, and been by a divine power engrafted into their minds, before they could continue in it. For clearly they could not continue in what was never begun. And this leads us to consider what is the first beginning of a work of grace upon a mans soul, which consists in the spiritual fastening of divine truth with power in his conscience. Some word (and by word we are not to understand in every case exact letters and syllables, but some scriptural truth,) is fastened with a divine power in the conscience; is lodged by the Holy Ghost in the soul. And what is the consequence? No sooner is the word lodged in a mans conscience, than it produces a certain definite effect; and the Lord has given us several parables, to point out the nature of this effect.

He compares it for instance, in one parable, to leaven: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened." (Matt. 13:33.) There the Lord points out what is the inward effect of the word of God lodged in a mans conscience, by comparing it to the effect produced by the lump of leaven in the three measures of meal. It ferments, it heaves, it rises, it penetrates and pervades the whole mass; the dough is no longer the same substance that it

was; a change takes place, and chemists would tell you a chemical change, whereby it is no longer what it was before, mere flour, and salt, and water, but the leaven so diffuses itself and penetrates into it, and as it were regenerates it, that a new substance is formed, which when baked we call bread. Thus it is with the word of God lodged in a mans heart. It does not lie there as a stone on the pavement, inoperative, without producing any effect in the spot where it is lodged; but it diffuses a secret influence through a mans soul, and by it he is begotten again. According to those words: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures" (James 1:18): "Born again," says the apostle Peter, "by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Pet. 1:23.)

But the Lord uses another figure to shew the same work. He compares the kingdom of grace in the soul to seed cast in the ground. There we have the effect of a work of grace, equally clearly and definitely pointed out. The seed does not lie like a pebble in the tilth into which it falls; but no sooner does it reach the seed-bed, than a process, a change takes place. Light, heat, and moisture all combine; and the effect is that a root is shot downwards, and a blade rises upwards. Thus it is with the word of God lodged in a mans heart; the light, heat, and moisture of God's Spirit working in the word cause it to germinate and take root, so that it fastens downward into the conscience, and springs upward into a God glorifying profession. This is all the difference betwixt receiving the word in the letter, and receiving it in power.

Again: the apostle James, speaking of the same work, compares it to a graft. How beautiful and yet how simple are scripture figures! I have often admired them. And what is remarkable, they are not only so simple, but they are universal. We find very few figures taken from the customs of the East, which in this northern clime would not be understood; but such figures are employed as are universal to the whole race of men. Seed-sowing for instance and bread-making are known not only in all countries where civi-

lized man dwells, but are alike familiar to all, even the most uneducated classes of people. And this figure—grafting, which is carried on in every climate where fruit is to be found, is equally simple and intelligible. But how sweetly does it point out the work of grace upon the soul! There must be a wound first made in the stock, in order that the scion may fit into it; and thus not only grow into, but grow out of it; for it is in this close and living union between the scion and the stock that the whole success of grafting consists. Thus the word of God does not lie on a mans conscience, as a withered stick might lie upon a post, utterly dead and inactive; but the heart being wounded by God's Spirit, forms a bed (so to speak) for the engrafted word to lodge in; they meet together, they coalesce, they grow into each other, and they bring forth fruit to God's honour and glory. Vital religion will always be of an operative nature; it will not be a mere profession; a something put on to satisfy conscience, or to please others; but is an eternal reality, begun and carried on in the heart by the Holy Ghost.

2. Now wherever the word is thus lodged in, and grows into and out of a mans conscience, he will "continue in it." He will never (for God never will suffer him,) relinquish his profession. He may sink into the greatest depths of soul trouble, he may mount into the highest heaven of soul enjoyment, he may for a time be buried in the world, he may backslide after idols, he may be numbed with torpidity, and carried in his feelings to the very north pole of darkness and ice, so that all vital godliness may seem frozen up in his heart; and yet the life of God's Spirit in his soul never can leave him. Being once quickened into spiritual life, he is quickened into eternal life; for the Lord has said: "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." (John 6:47.) And therefore he will "continue in God's word." Whatever be the temptations his soul is beset with, (and there will be thousands of temptations to drive him back); whatever snares the world and the flesh spread for his feet, (and in some of those snares his unwary feet will often be entangled,); whatever blasts from hell Satan may breathe upon him, to fill him, if pos-

sible, with a measure of his own infernal blasphemy and malice, still he holds on. "The righteous shall hold on his way" (Job 17:9): "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18): "My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand." (John 10:28.) They "continue in Christs word," because "He which hath begun the good work" carries it on, and finishes it "until the day of Jesus Christ."

But wherever God makes a man honest by a work of grace upon his heart, (and if grace has not made you honest before God and man, you have at present no proof that you know any thing whatever of grace,) he continues just in that line of teaching that the Holy Ghost favours his soul with. He does not sail into unknown latitudes, and, seizing hold of the helm, pilot his own ship. He does not take up with other mens experience, work with other mens lines, speak with other mens tongues, and drink into other mens sentiments. If he do this, he is not "continuing in," but departing from "the word." He only "continues, in the word," who keeps wholly and solely to God's teaching in his soul. The moment that a man gets out of the track in which the Lord is spiritually leading him; the moment he takes up with an experience which God has not wrought in him, or lays hold of doctrines that God does not bring into his heart with power, he is not "continuing in the word."

One grand mark then and test of genuine discipleship is to keep in the path which God points out; to advance no further than God leads on, and to fall no backwarder than he draws forward. And to know, to feel, and to act upon this, is to be in the spot so sweetly described (Matt. 18:3), where the Lord declares, that "except we be converted, and become as little children, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." The little child does not chalk out a path for itself; it does not profess to feed itself, to clothe itself, to teach itself, to guide itself, to carve out its future prospects in life. The very mark of childhood is dependence upon

the parent; and the moment the child gets out of the parents hands, and sets up for itself, that moment it loses the grand characteristic of childhood. And so a professor of religion, the moment he sets up for himself, and turns away from the guidance of the blessed Spirit in his heart and conscience, loses the character of a disciple, because he departs from the simplicity of spiritual childhood.

II. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." What a stress the Lord lays upon that apparently little adverb indeed! And how the Lord, by the use of that little adverb, points out that there is a discipleship, which is not a discipleship indeed! It corresponds with an expression in the prayer of Jabez: "Oh! that thou wouldest bless me indeed!" (1 Chron. 4:10.) Jabez knew that there were blessings which were not "blessings indeed;" that is, not real blessings, not spiritual and heavenly blessings, such as alone can satisfy a God-taught soul. And thus the Lord Jesus, whose eyes are as a flame of fire to discern betwixt the righteous and the wicked, saw and pronounced a solemn sentence in the expression, "Then are ye my disciples indeed." As though there was a great possibility, and more than a strong probability, that many who at that time were disciples nominally, were not "disciples indeed."

What then is it to be a disciple "indeed?" It is to be made such by the Lord himself. How did the Lord make disciples upon earth? Did he not call them with his own voice? Do we not read, that "he called unto him whom he would?" (Mark 3:13)—no more, no less. And have we not, in nearly every case, a definite account of the Lord's individually calling each? In order then to be a "disciple indeed," the Lord by his own blessed voice, speaking with power to our souls, must have made us his disciples.

But we will, with God's blessing, look at a few marks of genuine discipleship; and may God enable us to believe that we possess them.

1. Discipleship implies devotedness. When the disciples followed the Lord, they devoted themselves to him. Thomas spoke what they felt in their hearts, when he said on one occasion, "Let

us also go to Jerusalem that we may die with him:" implying such a devotedness to him, that neither life nor death should separate them. If then a man has not, as the Apostle says, "given himself to the Lord" (2 Cor. 8:5), yielded himself up to his blessed hands, to be taught by him and him only, and to embrace him as "his Lord and his God," if he is not brought, by a divine work of grace upon his heart, to embrace his blood as the only atoning sacrifice for sin, his righteousness as the only justifying robe, his grace as the only salvation from "the wrath to come," his love as the only heaven begun below and perfected above; if he has not, in the depths of his soul, thus given himself wholly and solely unto the Lord to be his for ever; he lacks one mark of true discipleship. He is yet half-hearted; his "heart is divided, and he is found faulty" (Hos. 10:12); he has not yet "taken up the cross, and denied himself, and followed Jesus." He is yet like the rich young man, whom the Lord bade, as a proof sincerity, to sell all that he had, and give unto the poor, and come and follow him. (Matt. 19:21.) The root of devotedness was wanting in him; the Lord therefore struck a blow at that cursed root of covetousness, which is the bane of gospel devotedness.

2. Another mark of genuine discipleship is, separation. Did not the disciples separate themselves from all things when they followed the Lord? Levi leaves the office of publican, at which he earned his livelihood; Peter and his brother Andrew, James and John leave the one their nets, and the other the ship and their father, and followed him (Matt. 4:18, 21); they all separate themselves from what they were engaged in, that they might cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. Not that I mean to say, we are called upon to act precisely as they acted, in giving up those worldly callings in which grace found us, unless they are inconsistent with the will and word of God, as in my case it was to continue in a worldly system. Because the scripture expressly says that "every man is to abide in the same calling wherein he was called." (1 Cor. 7:20.) But what I want to point out is, that separation from things evil is

the very mark and test of genuine discipleship. Separation, for instance, from a world dead in wickedness; separation from another world dead in profession; separation from all God dishonouring doctrines, from all reckless and careless professors, from all things that in any way bring a reproach upon the gospel, or are opposed to God's glory and to God's truth. And this not merely outward separation,—that is in a measure easy;—but inward separation: separation in heart from the spirit of the world; separation from that spirit of covetousness, which as a canker seems to be feeding upon the very vitals of God's Church; separation from formality, self-righteousness, superstition, will worship, and all that "leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy;" inward separation of heart, soul, and spirit, whereby we yield ourselves up unto the Lord, that he may "work in us that which is well pleasing in his sight."

3. Another mark and test of genuine discipleship is an utter prostration of our own wisdom, our own strength, and our own righteousness at the feet of the Lord. Whom do we profess to serve? The Lord God of Israel. In giving up ourselves unto the Lord, in yielding up ourselves to his service, it is not some earthly monarch, whom we profess to devote ourselves unto; he could not demand all that is in us, though he might claim our outward service. But in giving ourselves up to the Lord Jesus Christ, in receiving him into our hearts as "our Lord and our God," in submitting to his righteous authority, in "kissing the Son," and bowing ourselves before his sacred feet, we prostrate before him every thing inconsistent with hi? Inward dominion and kingdom in our hearts. Our own strength stands in the way of his strength, for "his strength is made perfect in weakness;" then the genuine disciple has his own strength prostrated before the Lord, that the power of Christ may rest upon him, and shine forth in his infirmities. The genuine disciple prostrates too his righteousness at the Lord's feet; he tramples it under foot as "filthy rags;" he looks upon it with contempt and shame; he feels that it is nothing but pollution and abomination before God; and thus he casts it away at the feet of Jesus, that he may stand clothed

in that comely robe, which the Lord of life and glory wrought out and brought in. And he prostrates also his wisdom, so as no longer to be wise in his own eyes nor prudent in his own sight; but renounces all wisdom except that which comes from God's own mouth into his soul. As we read (Prov. 2:4-6), renouncing his own wisdom, he "seeks for divine wisdom as for silver, and searches for her as for hid treasures, knowing that the Lord giveth wisdom, and that out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." And thus he prostrates all his own wisdom at the foot of the cross, that the Lord may be his "wisdom," as well as his "righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." (1 Cor. 1:30.)

4. Another mark and test of genuine discipleship is a being conformed to the likeness and image of Jesus. What is the disciple to follow his Master for? Is it not to catch some resemblance to him? Is it not to be imbued with a measure of his spirit? Is it not to be penetrated and pervaded with his meekness and gentleness? Can a whole-hearted disciple walk with a broken-hearted Lord? Can a proud, presumptuous professor walk in sweet communion with a lowly and humble Jesus? Can one whose heart is in the world, and whose affections are completely buried in the things of time and sense, walk with Him, who was not of the world, but in every word and every action was separate from it, though he walked and moved in it? Can any one a prey to hypocrisy walk with Him, whose every word and every thought was uprightness and integrity? "The disciple is to be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord." (Matt. 10:25.) He is to think as Jesus thought; for says the Apostle, "we have the mind of Christ." He is to speak as Jesus spoke; for his "conversation is to be seasoned with salt." He is to walk, in a measure, as Jesus walked; for "he hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps." The genuine disciple catches (so to speak) the spirit of his Master; just as the cloak of the rising Elijah fell upon the worshipping Elisha, so does the spirit of the Lord fall more or less upon those who walk after him and cleave close unto him.

These (and doubtless there are more,) are some marks of genuine discipleship; and these marks test the reality of a mans religion. It does not signify what a man professes in the mere letter of truth; the mere profession of certain doctrines does not affect a mans heart, nor touch a mans conscience. A man may be in his sins, and under the wrath of God, just as much under the profession of the highest Calvinism, as though he were grovelling in the mud holes of the lowest Arminianism. Vital godliness is something deeper than a mere profession, and something higher, because a thing spiritual and supernatural. The mark then of a genuine disciple is not that he gives in his adherence to a certain creed, or believes, that such and such a minister is sent of God to preach the gospel, or belongs to such or such a church, or has gone through such an ordinance. Vital godliness is something very different from this mere husk, which is well enough to encircle the kernel, but is a thing totally distinct from it. To be a "disciple indeed" is to be a disciple in ones heart and spirit, made such by the supernatural and secret operations of God upon our conscience.

III. But we pass on to consider the blessed fruits and results of genuine discipleship. They are twofold, as stated in the text: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Spiritual knowledge, and divine freedom are the two blessed fruits and results of genuine discipleship.

But what is "the truth" spoken of in our text? It is not confined to certain doctrines, which are emphatically distinguished by the word truth: as it is said in common parlance, Such a minister preaches the truth, when all the truth perhaps that he preaches is contained in and confined to the five doctrinal articles that bear the name of Calvin. But "the truth" comprehends every thing, be it doctrine, be it experience, or be it practice, that God has revealed in his word of truth; and especially it embraces Him, who said of himself, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." To "know the truth," then, is to know every thing connected with the Person, work, blood, love, grace, and glory of Jesus, as revealed in the

scriptures of truth. We cannot admit a lower definition than that; we cannot take a portion of the truth, and say that and that only is "the truth." We cannot take one isolated street, or one little alley in London, and say that is the metropolis. No; we must take the whole circuit. And so to say this or that doctrine is "the truth" is incorrect; it is a part of "the truth," but "the truth" is not to be shut up in such a nutshell—is not to be limited nor confined to a few particulars. There are, I believe, some ministers and some hearers who would confine all the truth in the land to their pulpit, or their chapel; and call every thing lies and error, which their dim eyes do not see, and their tiny fingers do not grasp. But none can be said to have the whole truth who have not had the whole Bible spiritually revealed in their heart, and worked out experimentally in their soul. And where is such a minister or such a people to be found? "The truth," then, that is the whole truth, contains every thing of an unctuous and savoury nature, every thing that God has revealed for the salvation and edification of his Church. In a word, every line of the bible is "the truth," when God is pleased to make it known in our souls as such.

1. But the grand force of the promise lies in the word know: "Ye shall know the truth." What! in the future? Why should the Lord put it in the future tense? He would not allow that they knew it yet; they neither had the word, nor had they continued in the word. In order to "know the truth," they must not only have the word lodged as a vital principle in their conscience, but they must "continue in it," and be "disciples indeed;" proving their genuine discipleship by their adherence to the Lord at all costs and all hazards, cleaving to him through all the difficulties, temptations, and trials that their souls might be led into. To "know the truth" is to know it by a spiritual and supernatural revelation of it. Not to compare scripture with scripture, passage with passage, and parallel with parallel, and thus to elicit truth, as a man may elicit some truth in mathematics, or work a Rule of Three sum. People think if they can get a Concordance, or collect a number of parallel pas-

sages, and compare one passage with another, they have got hold of the truth; they have indeed in the letter, but this is not the power. That is another thing; that can only be made known in the heart by God's special application, and by the Spirits supernatural and unctuous revelation of it. And this all genuine disciples know. Genuine disciples feel their ignorance, their darkness, their spiritual inability to communicate to their own souls a saving and savoury knowledge of the truth. Their part is often to walk in "darkness which may be felt," to "grope for the wall like the blind, and to grope as if they had no eyes, and to stumble in desolate places like dead men." But many of our modern professors when they come to hear a minister of the truth preach, if they can but carry away his divisions, or recollect the substance of his discourse, are sure they "know the truth," when perhaps the Holy Ghost has never sealed a single portion of the sermon upon their hearts, nor made known any line of it with power in their consciences. Now it is the very ignorance felt by God's people, the very darkness of mind under which they often groan, the very clouds that hang over their path, which are blessed of God to teach them that they cannot instruct or guide themselves into a spiritual knowledge of the truth; and thus they are led to cry, and groan, and supplicate, and wrestle, and beseech the Lord to apply his own word of truth with power to their souls. And as the Lord is pleased to enlighten the eyes of their understanding, and to apply his truth with a divine unction to their hearts, they begin to know by soul experience, and by inward revelation, such a measure of truth as He himself makes manifest in their consciences. As the Lord, then, leads them to "know the truth"—for instance, the truth of his declaration with respect to their own vile, deceitful and corrupt natures, they "set to their seal" that God spake truth when he said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." (Jer. 17:9.) When they read that from within, "out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, fornications, murders, adulteries," and all that awful catalogue of human wickedness and crime (Mark 7:21), they "set to their seal" that the Lord of life and

glory spoke the real truth of the case. And when the Lord the Spirit leads them to see the glorious God-man Mediator at the right hand of the Father, they know that there is such a blessed Mediator, because he hears and answers the requests of their soul. In the same way are they brought to know the efficacy of atoning blood; the beauty of justifying righteousness; the sweetness of undeserved grace; and the love-taste of eternal glory. And thus they "know the truth;" not because this or the other minister preaches it, not because this or that eloquent or experienced writer has unfolded it, not because this or that Hymn Book contains it, no, nor even because the scriptures themselves reveal it, though through the scriptures all saving truth comes; but they know it by its being let down with power into their hearts, and experimentally and spiritually revealed in their consciences.

My friends, how many truths have you learned in this way? Say you, I believe in personal and eternal election, particular redemption, imputed righteousness, final perseverance, and all the doctrines of grace. So you may, and there are thousands in hell who do the same, for even "devils believe, and tremble;" but do you know these things, as the Lord Christ instructs his people into the knowledge of them? by first having the word fastened upon your soul with power, continuing in that word through many grievous temptations, painful exercises, and soul tribulations, proving your discipleship by cleaving to the Lord and yielding your soul up wholly and solely unto him, and then, as the Lord is pleased to lead you step by step and line by line into the truth, receiving it from his own blessed lips as a special and spiritual revelation in your conscience? That is the way to "know the truth;" and if a man live and die without "knowing the truth" in that way, he lives and dies in his sins, and where God is he will never come.

We live in a day very trying to God's real family. There is so much profession and so little possession, so much truth in the letter and so little truth in the Spirit, so much of the form and so little of the power; and we are so easily drawn aside, we so love to

be deceived, we so gladly drink down the delusive draught, that unless God himself is pleased in a special manner to undeceive us, and drag us through painful temptations and soul exercises, as through briars and thorns, and thus strip off every rag of creature wisdom, strength, and righteousness, we never seem to come rightly at a knowledge of the truth. And I think those who hear ministers of doctrinal truth are of all persons the most likely to be deceived; because when they are pleased with a mans eloquence or gift, or yield a complete assent to what drops from his lips, they are so fully satisfied that it is "truth," that they look very little at the way in which the truth is received into their own heart. Nay they may pride themselves to think that they have the truth in their chapel, and rest in that, when, were the matter probed to the very bottom, it would be found in many cases that they received it not from God, but only from the lips of their minister.

2. —But the second fruit and result of genuine discipleship is, spiritual freedom. "The truth shall make you free." What are we by nature? Slaves and bondsmen; slaves to sin, to Satan, to the world, to pride, to prejudice, to presumption, to every thing hateful and horrible; and only so far as the Lord brings us out of our wretched serfdom, do we come in any measure into real spiritual freedom. But what freedom is this? Oh! says one very trippingly upon the tongue—'Oh!' answers another in a moment from some corner of the chapel—'Of course it is gospel liberty that the Lord is speaking of. I do not doubt it; but just as "the truth" may perhaps include a little more than is contained in your church articles, and embraces a wider range than what is wrapped up in most Established or Dissenting nutshells, so the freedom of which the Lord speaks, may possibly (I throw it out as a suggestion,) have a more extensive scope than some of you may dream of. There is a freedom from things, distinct from gospel liberty, though gospel freedom will produce it. Gospel freedom consists, we know, in a freedom from the curse and hard bondage of the law; in a freedom from the wrath of God; in a freedom from agonising doubts and fears.

And God's people, when they "know the truth," and are blessed with a feeling reception of it, are favoured with this freedom. But is there not such a thing, think you, as being made free from the world? I am afraid, if we were to follow into their shops and counting-houses some who talk much of gospel liberty, we might find that the worlds fetter had not been struck off their heart. We might possibly find that some who could boast very largely, and talk very fluently of "standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free," had a golden chain, though invisible to their own eyes, very closely wrapped round their heart-strings. There is no use then talking about Christian freedom and gospel liberty, unless a man has liberty from something else; if he is not made free, for instance, from the power of covetousness, for the Scripture declares, that "a covetous man, who is an idolater, shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." To be made free, then, implies a liberty, not only from the curse of the law and so on, but also from the world, and the spirit of covetousness in the heart. There is a being made free also from the tyrannical empire of respectability; from the desire to rise in life; from the miserable system of outliving ones income, in order to cut a respectable appearance in the eyes of neighbours. Many who talk about gospel liberty, and would scorn any thing like imputation of bondage, are under the dominion of this tyrant, Respectability. And there is a being made free from the power of sin. I greatly fear, if we could follow into their holes and corners, and secret chambers many who prattle about gospel liberty, we should find that sin had not yet lost its hold upon them, that there was some secret or open sin that entangled them, that there was some lust, some passion, some evil temper, some wretched pride or other, that wound its fetters very close round their heart. And there is a being made free from self also: from proud self, presumptuous self, self-exalting self, flesh-pleasing self, hypocritical self, self in all its various shapes and turns, self in all its crooked hypocrisy and windings. We should then very much understate what this freedom is if we

said—'Oh! it is a freedom from the curse of the law, a freedom from eternal wrath and damnation, and left it there. No; we must extend the circle somewhat wider; and if we extend the circle, we may find that some, who boast much of gospel freedom, have not yet reached the bound of gospel liberty.

But "the truth shall make you free." And who want to be made free? Not those who are boasting of self-assumed freedom. The Jews, to whom the Lord spoke it, could not bear the imputation. Said they, "We be Abrahams seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, We shall be made free?" What an insult to talk to them of being made free; as though they were not free always! But they had forgotten the Babylonish captivity; they had forgotten the captivity under which they were at that moment to the Romans. Self deceit so blinded them, that they resented as an insult the imputation that they were not free, at the very moment when the Roman coin was circulating among them, carrying with it the mark of their subjection. And think you, this will not bear a spiritual application? Freedom! what, think you that I am not free yet? am I in bondage?—will say many a one who is a slave to his lusts. Many cannot bear to be thought in bondage, who have never yet known any thing of being made free by the truth. But the truth will make a man really free. It will free him, not merely as to those things, in which gospel freedom is said chiefly to consist; it will make him free from the fear of man, from the smiles of the creature, from bowing down to any person to gain his good opinion; it will make him free before God, so as to walk before the Lord with an enlarged heart.

"He is the free man whom the truth makes free, And all are slaves beside," sang a Christian poet; and when the truth, any part or portion of it, comes into a mans heart, it makes him free, because it has a liberating effect. And if time sufficed, I might endeavour to point out how every part and particle of God's truth in a mans conscience, from the first teaching of God upon the soul, has the seeds of freedom in it, and works in him a freedom from

those things, in which he was entangled.

We have seen then a little of what it is to be a genuine disciple, and what are the blessed fruits and effects of genuine discipleship; and if we are enabled, by God's blessing, to trace out in our souls honestly that we possess the marks and tests of genuine discipleship, we stand interested, whatever be the darkness of our mind, in all the promises made to those who are Christs, and in all the blessings stored up in heavenly places for them.

But my business this evening is, to speak a few words on behalf of the Aged Pilgrims Friend Society. A friend, speaking of it, remarked to me the other day, that "of all Societies it was the worst supported." "This witness was true." And it caused this question to arise in my mind. What are the causes of this general want of support? This effect cannot arise but from certain causes; what then are the causes of this general indifference to its wants and claims?

1. The first cause that strikes my mind is this. The patrons and the supporters of, as well as those who are supported by this Society, profess those doctrines of sovereign, discriminating grace, which are hateful to the bulk of the professing world; and therefore, from their very profession of truth, a stigma is necessarily cast upon the Society. Those who are wrapped up in self-righteousness will of course turn their backs upon it, and cannot support a Society, which fosters what they consider most pernicious heresies.

2. Another apparent cause of its want of support, is that it does not lend its aid to, what the late Thomas Hardy used to call, "mans godship." You know what the old serpent said to Eve, when he breathed his poisonous words into her ears: "Ye shall be as gods." His temptation was to elevate her into godship. Now man, unhumiliated man, never can do with any thing that does not flatter this imaginary godship. Bible Societies and Missionary Societies, from the Christian knowledge Society down to the humblest Tract Society, all flatter mans godship. They say—'Co-operate with God; it is your province to convert the world; send forth your Missionaries, and convert all men to a knowledge of the truth.' This exalting men

into gods is wonderfully pleasing to the flesh; and thus all rush forward to contribute to a Society, whatever it be, that flatters them by making "lords many and gods many."

3. Another cause, as it strikes my mind, is the general poverty of those who love the truth. God has "chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom;" and therefore, the bulk of God's people being poor, they have so little to contribute to the wants of others, that this Society cannot command those subscriptions and those sums, which are readily contributed by such as love a flesh-pleasing gospel.

Without going further, I think these three causes will sufficiently account for its want of support. But is not that a great reason why we should give ours? Suppose, as we were walking in the street, there were some pitiful accident (so called) to take place, and the people held back, and no body would go forward. Some human being was crushed, and lay bleeding, and dying, and all stood aloof; would not the very circumstance of their standing aloof, not merely draw forth the pity of our heart towards that suffering object, but induce us, for the sake of suffering humanity, to lend some aid? And if the religious world, who support the various Bible and Missionary Societies, if the numerous chapels and churches in London that despise the truth, hang back, who are to come forward? Why, those surely who believe the same truths, whose hearts are touched by the same Spirit, who are brothers and sisters of the Pilgrims whom the Society supports, and who are "bound up in the bundle of life" with them and their common Lord. Thus the very reason why we should come forward, those of us who have it in our power, is because others hang back; their keeping back is the very thing to push us forward.

And who are the persons, whom we are called upon to support? They profess to be—and we trust that they are—pilgrims; Aged Pilgrims; travelling on to a better country; only needing a little more of this worlds good; pressed down with poverty; suffering often perhaps pangs of hunger and want; fearful of being ejected

from their little tenements, and of being turned out of their garrets (which, though uncomfortable to us, are comfortable to them,) by some cruel landlord. How anxiously do they watch for the coming of the visitor! I have no doubt the husband says to the wife, or the lonely widower, or desolate widow to himself or herself—"Tomorrow the visitor comes; there will be the money for the baker, or for the rent." How anxiously he is looking for the sum he is to receive! Yes; but how is water to come out of the well, if there is no water in it? Or if we lock up the handle of the pump, how is the water to flow? You must give the spring; it is your part, your privilege, to help to fill the well; and then the visitor has but to drop the monthly bucket, and draw up a supply for the Aged Pilgrims. How painful it must be for these poor creatures, when the time comes, and there is no money for them! I am told that the Society has been sometimes driven actually to want the money for the next payment, unless by some miraculous and providential interposition; and God has sent some person, with grace in his heart and money in his pocket, just in time to help them out of the present difficulty, that they may look up to Him in the next emergency.

I hope we shall see this evening, then, a liberal collection. And to the marks of genuine discipleship which have been brought forward, I hope I may be able to add another; and what is that? "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye love one another." But how are we to show our love, except by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and giving drink to the thirsty?—which the Lord himself will acknowledge as done to Him, when he will separate the sheep from the goats.

But I will add no more. Exhortations fall with little power, where God does not own them to the heart. And therefore I will conclude with reading a statement that has been put into my hands.

"This Society has extended its valuable aid to 1, poor aged members of the mystical body of Christ, amongst whom have been distributed £22, . There are at present 47 pensioners, who receive £10,10. per annum, or 17s. 6d. per month; 117 at £5. 5s.

per annum, or 8s. 9d. per month; and 169 approved candidates, who receive 4s. a month. In the whole 333; amongst whom are distributed monthly, at their own habitations, upwards of £126. The income arising from annual subscriptions does not exceed £905; while the expenditure is £1575; leaving a deficiency of £579, two-thirds of the amount of the subscriptions, which presses heavily on the Committee, and which they have to make up by obtaining donations and collection sermons wherever they can. Every department is filled gratuitously. Annual subscriptions, Donations, and Legacies, will be thankfully received."

50 THE HOPE OF THE HYPOCRITE

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Thursday Evening,

August 3, 1843

"For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his prayer when trouble cometh upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" Job 27:8-10

What was the main subject of controversy between Job and his three friends? It was whether Job was a hypocrite or not. His friends, seeing him afflicted with such heavy calamities, and hearing the passionate and rebellious expressions that came out of his lips, unanimously came to the conclusion in their minds, that a child of God could neither, on the one hand, receive such heavy visitations from the Lord's hand, nor, on the other, make use of such peevish and rebellious language; they set him down therefore to be a hypocrite. Job, on the contrary, knew he was not that. Why the hand of the Lord had so gone out against him he knew not; and why his soul was permitted to be so harassed and distressed he could not understand. But one thing he was certain of, from God's

past dealings with his soul, and from the experience which the Lord had wrought in his heart, that he was not the character his friends believed him to be. He would not yield, nor submit to such a charge; and God himself knew that Job was in the right; and that however harassed he was in his mind, and whatever self-righteousness might lurk in him, yet he was free from that imputation.

By way then of answer to his friends' accusation, Job in the text brings forward certain marks and tests which he knew hypocrites had not, and which he knew he had. He says, "Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" Job knew well that no hypocrite could ever come up to these two marks; and that with all his craft and subtlety, he never was in possession of these two tests.

But before we come to this part of the subject, it will be desirable to go through the preceding portion of the text. And I do not know a simpler or better way than to take it as it stands, and see what light the blessed Spirit may throw upon it.

I.—We will commence then, first, with the character pointed out in the expressive word "hypocrite." What is the meaning of the term? It signifies, at least in our acceptation, "a stage-player; one who assumes a part, and wears a character that is foreign to him; one who is not the man he professes to be." This is as simple and as concise a definition as I can give of the character of a hypocrite.

But it appears to me that there are two classes of these characters; one, who knows what he is, and the other, who knows it not. There is one who may deceive others, but does not deceive himself; and there is another who may deceive himself, but does not deceive others. Thus, there are those, I believe, who know they are wrong, and yet never put up a cry to a heart-searching God to make them right; who know that they have taken up religion for wrong ends and base motives, and that they were never led into any portion of truth by the Spirit of God; but in order to gratify some carnal design, have embarked upon a profession without any moving power felt in the heart. The other, who form the more

numerous class, and most abound in the professing church, are persons so deceived by Satan, so ignorant of themselves and of the God they have to deal with, and having such a veil of delusion over their hearts, that they are self-deceived, according to that word, and a solemn word it is, "deceiving, and being deceived." (2 Tim. 3:13.) Not merely deceiving others, but being deceived themselves; not base designing hypocrites, but believing they are right, and only learning they are wrong when "trouble comes upon them, and God takes away their soul." And be it remarked, that neither of these two classes are ever troubled or distressed about their hypocrisy; the first, because their conscience is seared, and the second, because they are fully persuaded they are right. So that I believe we may lay it down pretty well as a general truth, that those who are exercised with distressing doubts and fears about hypocrisy, are not hypocrites; and, on the other hand, that those who, with brows of brass, and necks of iron, would resent with the greatest warmth the imputation of hypocrisy, would, could you look into their hearts, be found really guilty of the charge.

II.—But having considered the hypocrite's character, I pass on to consider his hope. "For what is the hope of the hypocrite?" He has then a hope. Scripture speaks of two kinds of hope. "There is a hope that maketh not ashamed," (Rom. 5:5); "a good hope through grace," (2 Thess. 2:16); "a hope, as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil," (Heb. 6:19); the hope that stands as a sister with faith and love, (1 Cor. 13:13); and the hope whereby the soul is saved. (Rom. 8:24.) And there is another kind of hope, which the Scripture also speaks of, and which it has stamped with peculiar and indelible marks. It is compared for instance to "a spider's web," (Job 8:14); and this comparison throws a little light on its character. What is the spider's web? It is a filthy thing—spun out of the creature's own bowels—only intended to catch flies—and broken to pieces by the first puff of wind. Now carry these ideas into the spiritual figure. The "hope of the hypocrite" comes from himself; it does not spring out

of any testimony of God in his conscience, any dealings of the Spirit upon his soul, any drawings up of his affection towards the Lord Jesus, or any discovery of God's presence or favour: but it is spun, laboriously spun, out of his own filthy heart. As the spider also spreads out its web in order to catch flies for its food and sustenance, so the hypocrite spreads out his hope before the eyes of men, that he may catch the buzzing flies that flit about the religious world, and feed upon their flattery and applause. But, like the spider's web, it will be blown away by the first puff of God's anger; by the first blast of his nostrils it will be swept away, and no trace of it left.

But the Scripture (Job 8:11, 12, the same chapter that compares it to the "spider's web") gives us another description of this hope, and illustrates it by another figure. "Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water? Whilst it is yet in its greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God, and the hypocrite's hope shall perish." The "hope of the hypocrite" is here compared to "the rush" and "the flag." What is their site? Not the flowing stream, but the miry, sluggish ditch. Out of the mud they grow, and by the mud they are supported; let the muddy water be dried up, and "they perish before any other herb." Thus the "hope of the hypocrite" is not a tree that rests on a rock; it has no solid foundation on the work, blood, love, grace, and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, but grows up as a perishing flag out of the mud and mire of his own corrupt nature. It is not "a tree planted by the waters, that spreadeth out her roots by the river, whose leaf is ever green," (Jer. 17:8); but a wretched rush that stands in a sluggish pool, and fades and dies whilst yet in its greenness, as soon as the ditch dries up.

III.—But we pass on to consider his gain. "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained?" He has then a certain object in view, which he is often allowed to gain. Now this gain is not necessarily, nor perhaps in the majority of cases, money, or

filthy lucre. It may indeed happen that a man may put on a profession of religion for the sake of filthy lucre; but we cannot confine the gain here spoken of to that one thing. If he has obtained his purpose in any way, it is gain; and Job seems to intimate this, by not mentioning any specific object, but leaving the nature of the gain ambiguous. But “what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained?”

God then allows him to gain his ends. And if this be money, perhaps while he is thwarting every plan that his people set their hand to, and blighting every prospect that rises up before their eyes; whilst he is bringing them continually to poverty, and never suffering them to prosper in any thing; every project that the hypocrite puts his hand to flourishes; and, like the fabled Midas, every thing becomes gold under his touch. Let him, for instance, commence business under the most unpromising circumstances, let him set up a shop in the most unlikely neighbourhood, everything succeeds, customers come in, and all things are prosperous.

But I have hinted that we should err, if we limited this gain to filthy lucre. Each man has a peculiar object, and in the attainment of that object his gain consists. Thus, the approbation of others may be an object of gain with many; to have the good opinion of his fellow-creatures, and to be highly thought of may be his darling aim. Perhaps such an one may have a strong memory, and being well versed in the Scriptures, and very fluent in quoting them, may draw a certain degree of approbation from those before whom the gift is exercised; and this is his gain. Or he may be well informed in his judgment upon Scriptural truth, may compare passages together with great neatness, and so cast light upon the word; and may derive much pleasure from being “confident that he is a guide to the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes;” when all the time he has but “the form of knowledge and of the truth” in the letter. (Rom. 2:19, 20.) Or he may have a gift in prayer, and this gift may so shine in the eyes of professors as to draw their approbation; and thus

this wretched creature may gain his ends, in having the applause of others bestowed upon his gift.

Or it may be, and this perhaps is the most common case of all, that his gain is his own good opinion. The good of opinion of others is only now and then given, and that perhaps rather grudgingly: but our own good opinion, what a constant companion is that! It gets up with us, and it lies down with us; there is no one to contradict it, and it is always present to whisper its sweet flattery into our ears. If a man only gets his own good opinion and his own approbation, he has a constant source of pleasure opened up in his own mind. There are a great many people, therefore, who become hypocrites merely to gain a good opinion of themselves, and will adopt any mode of compassing this end. Is it then to be gained by a profession? By a profession it shall be gained. Is it to be obtained by receiving the doctrines? By the doctrines it shall be obtained. By talking about experience? By talking of experience it shall be attained. By humble looks? By humble looks it shall be had. By acts of liberality? By such actions it shall be gained. Whenever a hypocrite is fully bent upon gaining a certain object, he will put in practice every artifice in order to get it. And God lets him gain it. He does not deal with him as with his own children; he will not let them do anything that is not for their welfare; but he deals with him spiritually, as you do with yours naturally. If you have children, and see them playing in the streets, and quarreling or acting wrong, you rush out, or call them in doors, and chastise them if you know it is necessary. But if you look through a window, and see others fighting and quarrelling who are not your children, you leave them alone and take no notice of them. The reason is, because they are not yours; if they were, you would punish them severely, rather than they should be doing those things which you know to be wrong. Thus it is with those who are God's children, and those who are not. The Lord lets the hypocrite fill up the measure of his iniquities; he suffers "his eyes to stand out with fatness, and lets him have more than heart could wish" (Psalm 82:7); but he

sets his feet in slippery places, and he is brought into desolation in a moment. Be not surprised then that ungodly men and hypocrites flourish in the world, and are at ease in Zion, while you, on the contrary, are poor in circumstances, and are tried and exercised in your mind. Be not surprised, if you see every dishonest plan and scheme of theirs flourish, while every honest plan of yours is marred and blighted. God has reserved some better things for you; therefore he chastises you with affliction as a child; but he has reserved eternal wrath for them, and therefore they have their portion in this life.

IV.—But we pass on to consider the hypocrite's trouble. "Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?" It seems then there is a period when troubles comes upon him. And what is that period? The blessed Spirit has marked it out in the text. "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" That is his time of trouble, "when God taketh away his soul;" when he stands before the eyes of an angry God on his deathbed, and his soul is about to pass into eternity. Now it is very sweet to my mind, that the time of the hypocrite's trouble is thus distinctly marked out, because it shows that he has no soul-trouble till he comes to die. If you and I, then, have known something of soul trouble before now, we have not this mark against us. He embarked smoothly on a profession; his religion never began nor went on with trouble; his was an easy, comfortable, flesh-pleasing path from first to last. He never knew sighs, groans, tears, and cries; he never rolled upon his bed, full of anguish, and bitterness of soul; his conscience never bled under wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores. In all his profession of religion, all his life long, he had been cheerful, easy, and comfortable. But now, when God is going to "take away his soul;" when the wrath of the Almighty, the foretaste and prelude of wrath to come, flashes into his conscience, then for the first time he begins to be in trouble.

V.—But with this trouble we read of a cry. "Will God hear his cry?" No; he will not. But why should not God hear his cry? Has

he not promised to hear cries and groans? He has. But not the cries of hypocrites; he has never promised to hear them. When a man has mocked God all his life-time, insulted him to his face, done everything to provoke him, and to deceive and distress his people; when it comes to the last, and he stands upon the brink of eternity, should natural convictions at last press a cry from his carnal mind—will God hear that? No: I say, God will not hear that cry; because it is not the cry of a child, not the cry which the blessed Spirit raises up in the soul, not the breathings forth of a broken and contrite heart into the ears of a listening God. It is nothing but the cry of a natural conviction; and God has never promised to hear and answer that. Nor after all, is it so much a cry to God for mercy, as a howl of fear and anguish as the Lord says (Hos. 7:14), “They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds.” But whether so or not, he never cried to God before: it was with him all assurance and confidence. I dare say, had he been here he would have sung at the top of his voice every hymn given out that spoke of assurance. I cannot doubt but his voice would have been heard swelling amongst the throng; and the higher the assurance, the louder would the note have swelled. But there was no cry when alone in his room; when he sat by his fire-side, and hung his head upon his hand, there was no groaning prayer going out of his soul unto God; when he was engaged in his daily business, there was no secret sigh that the Lord would look upon him and bless him. His religion never consisted in sighs and cries unto the Lord; but was a tissue of deceit and hypocrisy from beginning to end.

VI.—But having seen what he is, we will now proceed to see what he is not. The Holy Spirit by Job speaks in the text of certain marks and tests which this wretched character, with all his gains, never attained to, and which Job knew his soul was in possession of. He says, “Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?” As though he had said, “You have charged me with hypocrisy; and though you have known me many years,

and have seen how God has dealt with me in time past; yet now, because this trouble has come upon me, you accuse me of the blackest of crimes, you charge me with being a hypocrite. Now I ask you," said the Patriarch "this question: answer me as honest men. Call to mind all the hypocrites you ever knew; look at them in their various classes: gauge and measure them in their different bearings; and then tell me, if you can find these two marks in any one of them, 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?'" Depend upon it they were dumb. Not one of them could say, that of all the hypocrites they had known in the course of a long life, they had ever found one with these two marks on him.

1. What is the first? "Will he delight himself in the Almighty?" No: he will not. And why not? Because with all his self-assumed religion, he was never made a partaker of a new nature, was never regenerated by the Holy Ghost, never had a new heart given to him, and a new spirit put within him; in a word, he never had bestowed upon him an inward, spiritual, and supernatural faculty, whereby alone God can be seen and known. And that was one and the main reason why he could not "delight himself in the Almighty." Nature, however highly polished and varnished, can never rise up to a spiritual knowledge of eternal realities, still less rise up to any spiritual acquaintance and communion with the blessed God. But, besides this, the Lord had never, in any degree, let down a measure of his mercy and grace into his soul; and for want of this also, he could not "delight himself in the Almighty."

But what does delighting himself in the Almighty imply? It implies reconciliation. God and man by nature are at variance; there is a bar between them; sin has interposed, and cut asunder the original knot that linked the Creator and the creature together. Man has become "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart." He is born in sin; his "carnal mind is enmity against God;" therefore he needs reconciliation. And in order that this reconciliation may be effected,

there must be an external and an internal reconciliation. Sin must be put away, righteousness brought in, and God well-pleased with the sinner, before external reconciliation takes place. And this was effected by the sacrifice of Christ once on the cross, when "by that one offering he perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. 10:14.) The apostle therefore says, "And that he might reconcile both unto God by the cross, having slain the enmity." (Eph. 2:16.)

But besides the external there is an internal reconciliation, according to Rom. 5:11, "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement," or, as it is in the margin (which is the more literal rendering of the word), "by whom we have received the reconciliation." To receive this reconciliation is to receive into our heart and conscience the reconciliation Christ has effected by the substitution of his sacred person; and to receive into our affections the Lord Jesus Christ as Mediator between God and man.

But the wretched character in the text never knew the enmity of his carnal mind; sin was never opened up to him in its hideous colours; he had never felt the alienation of his heart from God; he never knew the curse of God's law; and therefore he knew nothing experimentally of reconciliation, because he had never experimentally known variance. Nor had his eyes been enlightened, his heart touched, or power been given to him to embrace the Lord Jesus as the Reconciler of the church to God. Nor again, had the Lord God Almighty ever let down any measure of his love into his soul, or ever indulged him with a taste of his presence. He had never found the word, and eaten it. (Jer. 15:16.) He had never fed upon it, and found it "sweeter than honey or the honey-comb." He never had his affections fixed where Jesus sits at the right hand of God; he never enjoyed, feelingly enjoyed the truths of the gospel, nor did his soul ever banquet on them, and find them to be "fat things, full of marrow, and wine on the lees well refined." He had never, in all his religion, any sensible enjoyment in his soul of the truths which he professed to believe; for they had no place in him, as the Lord

said to the Jews, "My word hath no place in you." The truths of the gospel were never grafted in his heart; never formed his spiritual meat and drink; never were the element in which his soul lived. The tokens of God's favour never were his happiness and his heaven, and he could be perfectly contented without them; indeed he was more happy without religion, even such as he had, than he was with it; for his heart was in the world, buried in the things of time and sense. He had never, in all his professing life, one feeling desire after God, one spiritual panting after him, "as the hart panteth after the water-brooks." He and the Almighty never enjoyed blessed converse; he never walked and talked with him "as a man talketh with his friend." He never sat alone that he might converse with God, away from all intrusion; he never hid himself in his chamber, or buried his head beneath the bed-clothes, that he might commune secretly with the Almighty. He never enjoyed the presence of God, nor mourned his absence; never sought his favour, nor feared his frown. His heart was never lifted up towards the Lord that he would come down and bless his soul. So that all his profession, his gain, and his hope were idle and vain, because he lacked this one grand thing, "delighting himself in the Almighty." Spiritual joy and consolation were never known in his soul, but were always foreign to his experience, and always a stranger to his feelings.

Now, do you think, with all your doubts, fears, troubles, and exercises, that you did ever "delight yourself in the Almighty?" Was your soul ever drawn out in unutterable partings and longings after the blessed enjoyment of his presence? Was this ever your heart-felt language, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee?" And have you ever said to Christ, "Thou art all my salvation, and all my desire?" Was there never an object on earth that yielded such delight to your soul as the Lord Jesus Christ? never an object so embraced in the arms of your affection as his glorious Person; never anything that so melted, moved, and softened your heart as a sense of his dying love? Then you are not a hypocrite, nor can all the men or devils in the world

make you out to be one; for you are one that “delights yourself in the Almighty.” God himself has stamped that as an indelible mark on his children, as a proof of their sincerity; and recorded it in these burning letters of ever-living light, as a testimony for them, as well as a mark against all, however high in their pretensions, or consistent in their profession, who live and die ignorant of it.

2. But the Lord in the text has given us another test, “Will he always call upon God?” No. How beautiful it is to see the evidences that the Lord has given us in his Scripture. If we look at these two evidences, we shall see how wisely they are put together. For there are doubtless living souls that might say, “The test just brought forward is too high for me; I fear I do not delight myself in the Almighty; I cannot come up to that; it is beyond my reach: My heart is so hard, my faith so weak, my love so little, my affections are so roving after the things of time and sense, and my soul walks in such darkness, that I cannot reach up to this solemn test, delighting myself in the Almighty; it seems to cut me off!” Well, but the Lord has not cut you off, because you cannot come up to this test; he has given you another. So that if the first test cuts your head off, the other test will put it on again. “Will he always call upon God?” See the wisdom of the Holy Ghost in the position of the words. Men sometimes think they can improve the Scriptures; they are going to introduce this alteration, and make that wonderful correction; but they would only mar the word of God, if they were to touch it with their critical fingers. Suppose then the word, “always,” were transposed; what would the effect be? “Will he always delight himself in the Almighty? Will he call upon God?” The mere transposition of the word always would spoil both tests. For where is the man who always “delights himself in the Almighty?” And the hypocrite himself may and does call upon God once in his life, when trouble cometh upon him, and God “taketh away his soul.” So that could we transpose the word “always,” by that little transposition we should spoil both tests. But when we look upon the word “always” as applicable to “calling

upon God,” we see how it suits and exactly fits in with the experience of a living soul, and gives the prayerless hypocrite no quarter. Does not he then, “always call upon God?” No: you never hear of his calling upon God, till “God taketh away his soul;” and then just before he breathes out his miserable soul into a never-ending eternity, he howls upon his bed, and cries unto God for mercy. But he never always “called upon God:” it was never his habitual practice: prayer had never been wrought in him by the hand of the Spirit; and it was only just when hell was opened before him that he prayed, sooner than be plunged into it. But the living family are marked by this test, that they always call upon God; that is, they are a praying, groaning, crying, sighing people, ever calling upon God: not calling upon him once, twice, or a few times in their lives, but it is more or less, their daily and habitual practice.

But what is it “to call upon God?” You will observe that the cry and the call are here distinguished from each other. It does not say, “Will God hear his call?” but “Will God hear his cry?” Nor again does it say, “Will he always cry unto God?” but, “Will he always call upon God?” There is, then, a difference which the Holy Ghost here makes; that a man may cry who never calls. We read in Genesis (4:26), “Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord;” and in the first verse of the sixth chapter, which is connected with it read, “When men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose.” Thus we see the connection (for the two chapters are closely connected), the fifth being, as it were, in a parenthesis, between calling on God and being sons of God.

To call on God is to call on him with “a spirit of grace and supplications” interceding in a man’s heart. It therefore implies a knowledge of God. When the Lord first quickens the soul into spiritual life, he implants in it “a spirit of grace and supplications.” I have always insisted on this mark, for I felt it so my self. I must always, then, insist upon it, that whenever God quickens a soul into

spiritual life, with his quickening work on the conscience, he communicates to the soul “a spirit of grace and supplications,” and that spirit is never lost out of the heart, till the “spirit of supplication” is lost in the universal song of praise before the Lamb.

Now no man ever did call upon the Lord, unless he had “a spirit of grace and supplications” implanted in him. He might have squeezed out a few formal prayers; he might have gone through a daily round of self-imposed forms; yet he never worshipped God “in spirit and in truth.” Or, he might, as very many do, pray what is called extempore: he might have kneeled down night and morning, or perhaps even seven times a day, and might have prayed without a form as the thoughts rose in his mind; and yet all the time never have had a breath of true prayer in his soul, nor once offered up a spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. But the soul that “calls on God,” calls on him through the Spirit interceding within him, “with groanings that cannot be uttered.” He has God set before his eyes, as the Psalmist says, “I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.” (16:8.) He has at times the presence of God in his heart, and the fear of God ever in his soul. He worships him “in spirit and in truth,” and he serves him “acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.” He does not worship an unknown Jehovah, but he knows whom he worships, because he has had a spiritual discovery of the being and character of God to his soul. And no man will or can call upon God, till he in some measure discovers himself to him, and draws out the pantings, longings, hungerings, and thirstings of the soul to himself.

But, as I have before hinted, much of the force of the expression lies in the word always. The word always is not to be taken in the strictest sense of the term; that is to say, it does not imply that a child of God is praying all day long, but that once having been favoured with “a spirit of grace and supplications” he never loses it out of his heart; but, from time to time, as the Lord the Spirit draws it forth, he pours it out into the bosom and ears of Jehovah.

For instance, there are times of soul adversity, trouble, and affliction; and when these come, the living soul will still be calling upon God; he will not be waiting for the sun to rise and shine before he seeks the Lord's face; he will not be waiting till a promise comes with power to his heart, before he visits the throne of mercy with sighs and tears. But when the soul is troubled and distressed, then prayers and supplications begin to flow out of the heart into the ears of God. And I believe, if I know anything about it, the more a man is pressed down with trouble, the more he will call upon God. When every thing is smooth with us, our visits to a throne of grace are short and rare; but when the soul is burdened, pressed down, afflicted, and troubled, these things press and squeeze prayer out of our bosoms; so that a man is never so prayerful, so continually seeking the Lord's face, and pouring out his heart before him, as when he is in soul trouble. Was it not so with Hannah? What made her pour out her soul before the Lord? Because she was "in bitterness of soul, and wept sore." (1Samuel 1:10.) She spoke "out of the abundance of her complaint and grief." (5:16.) When did Hezekiah pray? Was it when he was displaying the treasures of the temple to the Babylonish ambassadors? There was no prayer, I will venture to say, going out of the heart, when, in his pride, he was showing them "the house of his precious things." But when the prophet came with a message, that he was to "set his house in order," then "he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore." When did Jonah call unto God? Not when he was asleep in the sides of the ship; but when he was in the whale's belly, then "he cried unto the Lord out of the belly of hell."

Thus it is that times of soul trouble, force, so to speak, cries and sighs out of the heart of God's people. And then God will bow down his ear, and hear them; for he says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me," (Psa. 50:15); especially pointing out that as the season for the soul to call, and, that as the season when God will hear and deliver the soul that calls upon him. So the children of Israel, who were typical

of God's people, when in Egypt their lives were made bitter with hard bondage, cried unto the Lord. So in their various captivities, when they were oppressed by the Midianites, or by the Philistines, or by their other numerous enemies, they always "cried unto the Lord in their trouble," and he heard and delivered them "out of their distresses." (Psa. 107:13.)

But again. Worldly things are often much against God's people. Dark clouds in providence encompass their path, so that they cannot see their way; and this makes them call upon the Lord. But hypocrites do not go to the Lord in worldly trouble; they cannot go about mumping for charity, and "living," as they call it, "on Providence," when they have no object but to get all they can out of the bowels of God's compassionate children; while a true child of God, in his lonely garret, will be calling upon the Lord, and beseeching him to appear. The hypocrite will go down to Egypt and Assyria for help, and never think of asking it from the Lord; but his real children, who are suffering from poverty, will often conceal their wants even from the Lord's people, and go to the Lord himself, and tell him how they are suffering under temporal distresses.

The word "always" implies further, that under all circumstances and all states, at all times and seasons, and in all places, a God-taught soul will call upon the Lord. God's people will not be waiting for the morning or evening to come that they may pray. As they walk the streets, sometimes even as they are in worldly company, if thrown into it by business or accident, or as they are occupied in the various employments of life, from time to time there will be a lifting up and a breathing forth of their hearts unto God. They must call upon the Lord, because they cannot be truly happy without him. Guilt sometimes oppresses, condemnation burdens, and heavy temptations harass them; God hides his face; and they cannot obtain what their soul longs to enjoy. These things cause groans and supplications to flow out of their souls unto God that he would appear for them, come down, bless, and deliver them.

There may be, perhaps, some here who are exercised (as, I be-

lieve, many of God's people are at times exercised) as to their hypocrisy; and sometimes they may think themselves the most consummate hypocrites that ever stood in a profession. They may even think themselves so crafty and subtle that they are deceiving those who have the keenest discernment. But if you are exercised with these painful surmises, these doubts and fears, just see (and the Lord enable you to bring it to the light of his countenance) these two features of a spiritual character. Do not talk about your hope; it may be "a spider's web." Do not boast of your gifts; they may be altogether in the flesh. Do not bring forward the good opinion of men; they may be deceived in you. But just see if, with the Lord's blessing, you can feel these two tests in your soul, as written there by his own hand. If so, you are not an hypocrite; God himself, by his servant Job, has acquitted you of the charge. Did you, then, ever "delight yourself in the Almighty?" It is a solemn question. Did your heart and soul ever go out after the living God? Did affection, love, and gratitude ever flow out of your bosom into the bosom of the Lord? Did you ever feel as if you could clasp him in the arms of faith, and live and die in his embrace? Now if your soul has ever felt this, you are no hypocrite; and nothing can rise up out of your wretched heart, as an accusing devil, that can prove you to be one. Or if you cannot fully realize this, if you are one that always calls upon God, you are no hypocrite. I do not mean your family prayer, social prayer, wife or husband prayer, or your private night and morning prayers. I do not speak of your regular prayers, or any other of your regularities; for I believe that there is often more of God's Spirit, and more craving after God and delighting in him, in your irregularities, than in all the daily regularities which hypocrites delight in. But I mean, is there a sigh or cry by night, as well as by day; a pouring out of the heart into the bosom of God from time to time, as the Lord works it in you, in trouble, in perplexity, in sorrow, and in distress? This is a test and a mark which no hypocrite ever had or ever can have.

But if neither of these marks are to be found in you, what then

must I say? Why, it is greatly to be feared that if you are a professor, you are a hypocrite. If you have never known, in all your profession, what it was to “delight yourself in the Almighty;” if you have never turned away from creatures to converse with God; never felt his word precious, and enjoyed the sweetness of it in your heart. Or if you do not know what it is always thus to call upon God, as I have endeavoured to explain it, I say, it is a black mark against you, and it is to be feared, that your religion began in hypocrisy, is going on in hypocrisy, and is likely to end in hypocrisy; or I would rather say, end in ineffectual trouble, and in an ineffectual cry, which God will not hear, when “he taketh away your soul.”

51 HEAVENLY TEACHING

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning

August 6, 1843

*“All thy children shall be taught of the Lord.” Isaiah
54:13*

The full extent of the “spiritual blessings” wherewith God has blessed the church in “heavenly places in Christ” can never be thoroughly known in this time-state. It is only when the ransomed of the Lord shall reach the heavenly Canaan, that they will fully know either the awful gulf of misery from which they have been delivered, or the height of bliss and glory to which they are exalted in Christ. But sufficient is revealed in the word of God to shew that they are indeed blessed with peculiar privileges and mercies; and that in being thus blessed their distinction as “a peculiar people” chiefly consists. Moses, therefore, on one occasion thus pleaded with God: “Wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou

goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth". (Ex. 33:16.)

But of these peculiar blessings that God has blessed his church with in Christ, four seem especially prominent above the rest—their eternal election—their particular and personal redemption—their regeneration—and their heavenly teaching, which last is the promise contained in the text, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord."

But why should this last occupy a prominent place in the catalogue of covenant blessings? Because without it the others would be in a measure nugatory; for such is the blindness of man's heart by nature, so thick a veil of ignorance is spread over his understanding, and so completely is he "alienated from the life of God," that he never can have any spiritual knowledge of the "only true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent" (in which knowledge eternal life consists), until he is made a partaker of this divine teaching.

We will endeavour, then, with God's blessing, to trace out a little of the nature and effects of this divine teaching in the soul. And as it consists for the most part of two leading branches: first, the teaching whereby we know God; and secondly, the teaching whereby we know ourselves, we will look at each of these in their order.

I.—But it will be desirable, first, to consider what is the nature of this heavenly teaching. And as the Holy Ghost certainly knows and has described its nature best, we cannot do better than examine one or two of the scriptural figures and explanations given of it.

1. This divine teaching, then, is compared in one place to dew and rain: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew" (Deut. 32:2). But what is the nature and effect of rain, and more particularly of dew? It falls gently; and yet, though it falls so quietly and stilly, it has a penetrating and softening effect. Thus it is with God's teaching in the soul: like dew, it falls from heaven stilly and gently into the heart, and yet it penetrates the soul with a

secret and invincible power, that opens whilst it softens it. It does not tear it up, like hail or lightning, but it sinks deeply and yet quietly into it, and with a peculiar softening power so pervades it as to take a thorough and entire possession of it.

2. Another thing to which it is compared in scripture, is oil, or unction, as the apostle John says, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One;" and again, "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (1 John 2:20; 2:27). This figure does not differ very widely from the one just mentioned, but contains three leading ideas—that it penetrates, softens, and spreads. Thus the unction of God's teaching in the soul not merely penetrates and softens the heart into which it comes, but also gradually spreads and sinks into it more and more deeply; it supple the conscience and makes it tender, and penetrates into the inmost roots and fibres of a man's heart.

This teaching is the special work of God the Holy Ghost on the soul, and is as distinct from our own wisdom, or from any knowledge that we may obtain by the exercise of the natural understanding, as eternity from time, heaven from hell, and Christ from Belial.

II.—But we pass on to consider what are the special effects and fruits of this divine anointing.

The nature of this teaching is less plainly revealed in the scriptures than its effects. And therefore though the figures above quoted sufficiently shew that there is in its nature something soft and gentle, falling like rain upon the new mown grass, or like oil penetrating the heart into which it comes, yet, for the most part, we cannot, except by its fruits and effects, be certain that we are partakers of this divine teaching. But when we look at them (for it always will produce fruits and effects) we may sometimes, when the Lord is pleased to shine into the soul, come to a blessed conclusion, that we are anointed with this unction from the Holy One.

1. I believe, then, that the first effect of this special teaching

of God in the soul is, to convince us of the truth and authority of God's word. We may have professed to believe the word of God from our infancy; we may have been instructed by our parents or in the Sunday School as to the truth of the scriptures; we may have studied in books the evidence of their authenticity and inspiration; but all the while our heart was not touched with any divine power. The head might have been enlightened, but no enlargement of heart was ever sensibly felt under the power of truth, nor any powerful conviction wrought in the soul by the application of it, so as positively to convince us that God himself speaks in the scripture.

But when the "unction" of "the Holy One" drops into the soul with power, it speaks with such authority through the scriptures, that they are at once known and felt to be the word of the living God. If previously one had been tempted with infidelity, if the mind had been puzzled by apparent contradictions, so as to be almost on the point of giving up the scriptures as a divine revelation, yet when this special teaching and divine unction come into the heart, the word of God carries with it a power and authority that put every infidel argument, to the rout, and disperse every objection as the sun dissipates the morning mists: and the soul is abundantly satisfied that the scripture is the revelation of the mind and will of the blessed God. And whatever infidel objection may afterwards arise, whatever doubts may assault the mind, whatever contradictions may seem to unsettle the foundation of his hope, he never thoroughly loses the solemn conviction which God himself has given him, that the scripture is the truth of the living God.

2. The next thing, I believe, that this "unction from the Holy One" teaches is, the being of a God. Now, of the being of a God, we might have been persuaded by traditional religion, or we might have been convinced of it by natural conscience: but these could never give us a feeling conviction of the being of such a God as the scripture sets forth. The apostle Paul declares, that all men by nature are "without Christ... having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12), literally 'atheists.' And not only have they

no knowledge of the being of God, but as he again says, quoting from the Psalms, "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18). They have no inward conviction that there is a self-existent Jehovah, whose "eyes are in every place;" that he is an omnipresent, omniscient, almighty, eternal, and just God; that his eye sees into the secret and inmost recesses of the soul, and that he will one day bring them into judgment. But no sooner does "an unction from the Holy One" convince us of the power and authority of the inspired scriptures, than we learn through it the being and existence of a great and glorious Jehovah, who is around our bed, and about our paths, and spieth out all our ways.

3. But with this inward spiritual conviction of the being of God, there is manifested by this divine unction the character of Jehovah. Not merely that he exists, but that he is what he declares himself to be in the revelation of his holy character and attributes. His word is brought home with divine authority to the soul, and with a living power to the conscience; and thus it is taught to see him as a holy and a just God who will "by no means clear the guilty;" that he hates sin with a perfect hatred, and will infallibly punish all those who are found under the curse and condemnation of the law, when they stand before his dread tribunal. So that here the holy character of God is opened up with power to the soul by the work of the law in a man's conscience.

Many, I believe, of God's people, who have had a work of the law on their conscience, are at times much exercised and tried in their minds, whether they have really known it, for this reason, because no sentence of the Decalogue. or particular portion of the Old Testament has come with power into their heart. But, wherever the character of Jehovah, as a just and holy God. has been spiritually made known to the soul, there the law has done its work on the conscience. God, as the Lawgiver, is known, though the exact letter of the law may not be felt. The spirit of the law, in the hands of a just and a holy God, is made known to the heart and conscience, producing conviction, condemnation, guilt, and a sense

of ruin, where the exact letter of the law is not made use of by the Lawgiver to do the work. But the spirit of the law, in the hands of the Lawgiver, has produced condemnation, fear, guilt, and a sense of misery and ruin, so as to cut away all legal hopes, pull down self-righteousness, and lay the soul in ruins before God's footstool. And wherever this is experienced, there is a work of the law on the conscience.

4. But this teaching of the Spirit, when the soul has learned the holiness of God, and has felt itself condemned by his righteous law, and cut off from all hope or help in self—this same “unction from the Holy One,” which “is truth and is no lie,” unfolds to the heart, and brings into the conscience experimentally, a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those are striking words, and they have often rested with weight and power on my mind, perhaps no part of scripture more so, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). How briefly the Lord of life and glory has here summed up in what eternal life consists!

How many are anxious to know what is the way of salvation, how eternal life is to be obtained, and how to “flee from the wrath to come!” but the Lord Jesus has shewn in one short sentence in what eternal life consists, that it is in the knowledge of the “only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent.” He therefore that knows the Father and the Son has eternal life in his soul. The Lord Jesus, in the chapter, which I read this morning, quoted this amongst other passages of the Old Testament, and says, “It is written in the Prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me” (John 6:45). He lays this down, then, as one especial fruit of divine teaching, that it produces a coming unto him.

The Spirit, who teaches to profit, holds up before the eyes of the soul, the Person, work, blood, love, grace, and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He shews the soul that he is just such a Saviour as it needs. He opens up the dignity of his Person, and shews that

he is God-man. He makes known in the conscience that he has offered up himself a sacrifice for sin: that he has shed his atoning blood so that the sin of the church is for ever put away from the sight of a just God. He opens up before the eyes of the mind his glorious righteousness, as that in which, the Father is well-pleased, and in which, if the soul has but an interest, it is secure from the wrath to come. He unfolds to the heart the willingness of Christ to receive every coming sinner; he shews the treasures of mercy and grace which are locked up in him: and brings down in the heart the comforting words that he spake in the days of his flesh, such as, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37).

And sometimes he unfolds to the understanding, and brings into the heart a sweet melting sensation from seeing how, when Christ was upon earth, he healed the sick, gave eyes to the blind, and ears to the deaf; raised the dead, went about doing good; and how that in everything he said or did, he spake forth the kindness and compassion of his loving heart. Thus, he sweetly draws the soul on, whereby it comes to Christ, casts itself at his blessed footstool, and looks upon him with the eye of faith. And whenever he brings the soul thus to come to Christ, with a real feeling of ruin and misery, with a true sense of guilt and condemnation, with a sincere submission to God's righteousness (as the apostle says), "Not going about to establish our own righteousness," but a "submitting of ourselves to the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3), and a yielding up of ourselves into his hands, there is a proof of heavenly teaching. And whenever that blessed union of humility and love is felt, whereby the soul lies at the feet of the Lord, as Ruth lay at the feet of Boaz, beseeching him to cover it with the skirt of his garment, the Holy Ghost has wrought with power in that soul: it is taught of God: and has an interest in that special teaching, the result of which the Lord has declared to be, "Every man therefore

that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me” (John 6:45).

5. This blessed teaching also leads the soul up into a knowledge of the Holy Ghost. All God’s people are led into a knowledge of the Trinity: not indeed by metaphysical reasoning or subtle arguments addressed to the understanding. The Spirit teaches them, not by reasoning addressed to the head, but by the power and dew of divine truth resting upon the heart. All God’s people learn the doctrine of the Trinity in their souls. They learn, under divine teaching, the authority, justice, majesty, holiness, and in due time feel the love of God the Father. They learn the Godhead of Christ in their souls, by seeing and feeling the power of his blood, as the blood of God (Acts 20:28), and his righteousness as the “righteousness of God.” And they learn the Deity and Personality of the Holy Ghost by feeling the divine power of his operations on their hearts. They learn also that he is God, by perceiving how he scrutinizes all their actions, brings to light every secret thought, and applies passages of scripture to their souls, which none but God could produce, or so suitably apply. And when they are thus led by divine teaching, into the Three Persons of the Godhead, they are brought to know and feel in the depths of conscience, that there are three Persons, equal in power, will, essence, and glory, and but one Jehovah.

Now these truths no man can learn in a saving manner, except by this special teaching. He may know all this, and much more than this, in his understanding and judgment: but a sensible realization of the power of these things in the conscience, a divine melting of the heart under them, with an enlargement of soul, and an experimental enjoyment of them, is the alone fruit of God’s teaching resting on him, so as to make him “a new creature” in Christ.

III.—But, as I before hinted, a considerable branch of this heavenly teaching consists also in producing in us a knowledge of ourselves, for spiritual acquaintance with ourselves runs ever side by side with a spiritual knowledge of God.

1. We know not, for instance, the evil of sin till God makes

it effectually known in the conscience. We may, indeed, by the workings of natural conviction know this and that outward crime to be sin. We may at times, too, have had some sharp pangs of conscience on account of committing open sins against light and knowledge. But the evil of sin, its horrible and dreadful nature, we cannot know, except by this special teaching.

Now there are two ways whereby God makes us to know and feel the evil of sin; first, by the law; and secondly, by the gospel.

In the law, in the light of God's justice, we see the damning power of sin. We find God's justice arrayed against it, that it is totally contrary to his holiness; and that he could not be just, unless he visited it with his eternal wrath and displeasure. But though the law shews us the evil of sin, as committed against justice and holiness, it does not convince us of its evil as committed against love and mercy; it does not, therefore, teach us to hate and abhor it; nor does it produce any sensations of godly sorrow on account of it; but it rather stirs up rebelliousness, and genders to bondage; it rather works up enmity against God, because he has condemned sin, and will not let us commit it. In order, therefore, to teach the soul the evil of sin as exceedingly sinful, we must see it in the light of a suffering Jesus.

We must view by faith the Son of God, equal with the Father in essence, glory, and power, come down to the earth; we must behold him by the eye of faith as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" we must trace out all his life of humiliation from the cradle to the cross; we must go with him to the garden of Gethsemane; from Gethsemane to Calvary, and there behold God's only begotten Son, stretched betwixt heaven and earth, as "a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men," groaning out his soul under the weight of sin laid on him, and the hidings of his Father's countenance. And only so far as the Spirit leads the soul into the sufferings and agonies of a bleeding Jesus, does it really see and feel, and truly hate and abhor sin and itself as extremely sinful.

2. But heavenly teaching is also necessary to shew us what our

hearts are. We may, by observing the workings of the natural mind, come to some conclusion that we and all men are naturally very selfish, very proud, and very worldly: but all this does not produce any sense of godly sorrow, or any self-loathing on account of indwelling sin. But when the blessed Spirit takes us in hand, strips away the veil of delusion from our hearts, and opening up the depths of our fallen nature, discovers the secret recesses where everything that is filthy and loathsome hides itself,—then we begin to see and feel that we are sinners indeed; inwardly as well as outwardly, in thought and imagination, as well as by habit and practice.

It was this special teaching in the conscience that made Isaiah, when he saw the vision in the temple, cry out, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts” (Isa. 6:5). It was this sight of the purity of God, that made Daniel say, that “his comeliness was turned into corruption, and he retained no strength” (Dan. 10:8). It was this that made Job exclaim, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5, 6). And if any of us have ever learned to loathe ourselves before God, it is by having some special discovery of the purity and holiness of God, contrasted with our own vileness and filthiness.

3. Another fruit and effect of this divine teaching is, to cut in pieces, and root up all our fleshly wisdom, strength, and righteousness. God never means to patch a new piece upon an old garment; he never intends to let our wisdom, our strength, our righteousness have any union with his; it must all be torn to pieces, it must all be plucked up by the roots, that a new wisdom, a new strength, and a new righteousness may arise upon its ruins. But till the Lord is pleased to teach us, we never can part with our own righteousness, never give up our own wisdom, never abandon our own strength. These things are a part and parcel of ourselves, so ingrained within

us, so innate in us, so growing with our growth, that we cannot willingly part with an atom of them till the Lord himself breaks them up, and plucks them away. Then as he brings into our souls some spiritual knowledge of our own dreadful corruptions and horrible wickedness, our righteousness crumbles away at the divine touch: as he leads us to see and feel our ignorance and folly in a thousand instances, and how unable we are to understand anything aright but by divine teaching, our wisdom fades away: and as he shews us our inability to resist temptation and overcome sin, by any exertion of our own, our strength gradually departs, and we become like Samson, when his locks were cut off.

Upon the ruins, then, of our own wisdom, righteousness, and strength, does God build up Christ's wisdom, Christ's righteousness, and Christ's strength: as Jesus said to his servant Paul, "My strength is made perfect in weakness:" and this brought him to that wonderful conclusion, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12:9). But only so far as we are favoured with this special teaching are we brought to pass a solemn sentence of condemnation upon our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness, and feelingly seek after the Lord's.

4. Another fruit and effect of divine teaching is, faith, whereby Jesus is believed in to the saving of the soul. There is not a grain of living faith in the heart by nature. We may indeed have a certain sort of belief, we may have the workings of a natural faith: but as to any real spiritual faith, such as the apostle describes, as "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;" such a faith as was possessed by the Old Testament worthies recorded in the eleventh of Hebrews; such a faith as saves the soul from "the wrath to come," we know absolutely nothing of, until God is pleased to kindle it by his special teaching in our hearts.

5. Nor, again, have we any hope worth a straw, except what springs from divine teaching. We may indeed have the "hope of the hypocrite" which perisheth, but "a good hope through grace,"

as “an anchor of the soul;” the hope whereby “we are saved” (Rom. 8:24), which “maketh not ashamed” (Rom. 5:5): a “good hope” like this must spring up alone through the teaching of God, a making known of the Lord of life and glory, and raising up that power in our souls whereby anchor is cast on his blood and righteousness.

6. And love: that also is a fruit and effect of this heavenly teaching. There is no love to God, except as he is pleased to shed it abroad in the heart: teaching the soul to know him as the God of love. We may try to love him. and set him before the eyes of our mind: but love cannot be thus compelled to flow out to him: our hearts remain dead, cold, and stupid. And it is only as he is pleased to let a drop of love fall into the soul, that it flows back unto the eternal fountain whence it came down.

And so, with respect to love to the brethren. The apostle says, “Ye are taught of God to love one another.” This, therefore, can only flow from divine teaching, by the Spirit of God communicating his blessed unction to the soul, whereby when we see grace in them, we feel a sweet melting down of heart, a flowing together of spirit, and a knitting of affection to them. We may have had a selfish love in the flesh; but there can be no real love towards God’s people, except as the Lord is pleased to teach us by his Spirit to love one another.

7. Nor is there any humility, except as the Lord is pleased to teach the soul to be humble. And how does he produce genuine soul humility? By shewing us what we are, opening up the secrets of the heart, discovering the desperate wickedness of our fallen nature, and convincing us that sin is intermingled with every thought, word, look, and action.

8. Nor is there any spiritual patience, except what springs from this special inward teaching. Trials do not bring patience; they only stir up rebellion. We may pass through the heaviest afflictions, and so far from feeling patience under them, be worked up almost into desperation. But patience and resignation to the will of God flow immediately from the Lord himself; he alone can

teach the soul to be patient under his strokes, and shew us that “affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground” (Job 5:6). He alone can make the soul feel that chastisement comes from the hand of a Father, and open up to the heart that it is for our spiritual good; and thus give it to realize the blessed and happy results which flow therefrom, when it “yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:11).

9. Nor is there any spirit of prayer, except as the Lord teaches us how to pray. The apostles felt this when they said, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1). We cannot pray spiritually and acceptably, except as God teaches us. Parents sometimes try to teach their children to pray; and Sunday School masters and mistresses attempt the same thing with their scholars. But how grating these things are in the ear of a God-taught soul! Scarcely anything used to grate more upon my ears, when I had to attend the Church of England services, than hearing the Sunday School children shout out, “Take not thy Holy Spirit from us,” and other similar petitions with which they had no spiritual acquaintance. And few things I believe more hurt the ears of godly parents than to hear their carnal children idly repeating to the Lord words of which they neither know nor feel the meaning; and generally, I may remark, nothing is more offensive to a spiritual ear, than to hear carnal persons make use of petitions the power and sweetness of which they have never felt. God must teach the soul to pray. We may teach children collects and prayers, and to say a blessing before meals; but these man-made petitions do not please God, nor reach his approving ear. But when he himself imparts a spirit of prayer, he teaches the soul in sincerity and godly simplicity to seek his face, and to call upon his name. He teaches us our ruin and his mercy, our malady and his remedy, our lost estate and his salvation. No human teaching can make us know these things; but when he teaches, he draws forth the secret desires and breathings of the soul after himself.

10. Deadness to the world, and inward as well as outward separation from its company and wretched spirit, is an effect too of divine teaching. Until God is pleased to teach us, we do not see the evil of the world; but when the Spirit makes the conscience tender in his fear, we find that going into the world is like touching pitch; our hands become defiled, and we feel at once that “evil communications corrupt good manners.” When the Lord teaches us what we are, we find we carry about with us such combustible materials, so much gunpowder, that if a spark come near us an explosion may take place. And as those who are careful of their lives would not enter a powder magazine with anything that might cause an explosion: so when the child of God is under the power of divine teaching, and feels sensibly what a vile nature he has, he will be afraid of carrying his heart into the world, lest a spark might come in from some unexpected quarter, and in an instant set all his corruptions on flame.

11. By God’s teaching, also, we learn what a wretched evil covetousness is. It is indeed a sin, which it is to be feared many of God’s people are deeply tainted with: but its tendency is to eat out the very heart of vital godliness, and its very essence and spirit is idolatry; for the man who bows down before gold and silver, is as much an idolater as though he bowed his knee before stocks and stones. But when God teaches his people to profit, he fixes their heart on better things; he shews them the unsearchable riches of Christ, and thus unlocks their mind from that wretched love of money which is “the root of all evil.”

12. It is only by God’s teaching that we are enabled to feel for the wants of his children, that our hearts are moved with a sense of their many temporal sufferings, and have a disposition given to administer to their wants. But when you look at some who pass for God’s people, who have so much of “this world’s goods,” and yet appear so insensible to the wants of their poorer brethren, you wonder what they think of that scripture, “All ye are brethren.” But God must teach us to feel for their wants, and make us liberal to-

wards them according to our means, by laying them on our heart, and drawing out our affections towards them.

13. Every good word that we speak for the honour and glory of God must arise from his special teaching. However clearly and ably a minister, for instance, may preach the truth, every word will be utterly lost upon his hearers unless God is pleased to inspire thoughts and dictate words, and speak by him to the conscience. Every action, too, of our life will surely go wrong, unless it is under God's special guidance; and every step in providence we take will not be right, unless it is specially directed by God himself.

IV.—The teaching of God is not confined to shewing a man a few grand truths, and then leaving them to have a certain effect upon the conscience. But God's people need his teaching perpetually; and, in providence as in grace, we need unceasing instruction. I believe many a poor child of God often does not know how to do the simplest thing in providence, not even how to carry on his daily business, or execute his manual labour, except as the Lord is pleased to teach him: God must guide his eye and direct his hand, in the least things as well as the greatest. He needs divine teaching in every action if it is to be done to God's glory, and for every word if it is to be spoken in his fear.

But this special teaching of God can only be known and realized by those who have seen an end of all creature perfection, and who are completely and experimentally destitute of all wisdom in the flesh. Until a man is brought to see that he has no wisdom of his own, he will never seek after God's wisdom. But when he is brought to walk in darkness that may be felt, when the thick veil gathers over his mind, and God hides himself from his view; when eternal things are wrapt up in obscurity, and he cannot see the things of God, nor feel his interest in them; when "he gropes for the wall like the blind, and gropes as if he had no eyes;" when he is "led into darkness and not into light," he is brought to see that the Lord alone can teach his soul to profit.

God's teaching does not leave a man where it found him, dead,

stupefied, worldly, unfeeling, and carnal. If he is in distress, it does not leave him in distress; if he feels guilty, it does not leave him guilty; if he is in darkness, it does not leave him in darkness; but it lifts him out of these evils. Thus God's people are continually led to come unto him for his instruction, because they feel that without his special teaching they can know nothing as they ought to know. Nay, the more they have, the more they want to have; for no sooner is the light withdrawn, than the darkness is more sensibly felt. If any text of scripture has been opened up to them, it makes them want to have others made known in a similar way; if they have had any consolation, and it is taken away, it makes them want it again. So that the more wise and spiritual God's people become, the more foolish and carnal they appear in their own eyes; the stronger they are in the Lord and in the power of his might, the more sensibly do they feel the weakness of their flesh: and the more they are enabled to walk closely with the Lord, the more they discover the wretched wanderings of their base and sinful hearts.

Here, then, we see how God's people are distinguished from all heady, high-minded professors. They grow upward. but God's people grow downward. Special and divine teachings do not lead the soul into pride, arrogance, and presumption: but they lead to humility, simplicity, sincerity, contrition, brokenness of heart, low views of self, and admiring views of the Lord.

Natural wisdom only hardens a man's heart, sears his conscience, and makes him more worldly-minded: spiritual teachings make the heart tender, the glory of God its great object, and spiritual communion with the Lord ardently desired.

How, then, shall we know if we are God's people? Because we believe in election, particular redemption, effectual calling, and the final perseverance of the saints? Because we go to hear a certain minister, or belong to a certain church? A man may have all these things, and ten thousand times more, and sink to hell at last as a deceived hypocrite. But can we trace in our souls anything of this divine teaching?

The Lord has given us two marks or tests whereby it may be proved; let us then confine our attention to them for a moment or two, and see if we can find them manifested in us.

One is, "Every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me." Are you from time to time coming unto Christ, and breathing forth your desires and pantings after him, that he would reveal himself in your soul? Are you more or less daily seeking to "know him, and the power of his resurrection," and to enjoy the sweet manifestations of his love? Then you have a scriptural proof that you are taught of God.

But let us take the other test: "Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess. 4:9). Do you know anything experimentally of love to God's people? I mean a real, spiritual love to the poor, exercised, tempted, sin-burdened, and Satan-harassed family of God? Then, I will say you are taught of God!

The Lord enable us to see that we are taught of him. The Lord enable us to believe that we have received "an unction from the Holy One," that "anointing which is truth and is no lie"—the sure pledge and foretaste of eternal life.

But remember that the promise runs, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." There is no exception here. "All shall know me, from the least unto the greatest." It is very plain, then, that those who know nothing of this divine teaching are not manifestly the children of God: what they may be in the purpose of God we know not: but in their present state and standing they are not manifestly his children.

The Lord enable some of you to lay this to heart. And if it be his pleasure, may he touch the consciences of some who have never yet sought his face, and bring them to cast themselves as ruined sinners at the footstool of his grace and mercy! For he, who said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me:" also added, "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

52 THE SAINT'S PATH TO ETERNAL GLORY

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's
Day Evening

August 6, 1843

*"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his
eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a
while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."*

1 Peter 5:10

Philosophers tell us that every ray of light which comes from the sun is divisible into seven distinct colours. And this they shew by a very simple experiment. They cause a single ray to pass through a glass instrument of a particular shape, called a prism, and then throwing it upon a white surface, the seven colours are at once distinctly perceptible. I think we may carry this illustration into divine things. Truth as it issues from the Sun of righteousness is pure and simple, but as it passes into the mind of man, and again issues out of it, it takes the various hues and colours of each man's mind. Thus, we see that different ministers, taught we believe of God, have different lines of preaching. Some are clear and powerful in doctrine; others, deep in experience; others, led to insist on a practical walk and conversation; yet all are taught "by the same Spirit," and led into a knowledge of the same grand truths.

Nor is this less evident even in the writers of the New Testament. Though all were taught of God, and though all they wrote was by divine inspiration, yet we can clearly see a difference in them. Thus, we see Paul, an ardent, uncompromising champion of distinguishing grace, never forgetting the awful lengths of sin to which he was allowed to go when he persecuted the church of God; and, therefore, standing up with zeal and ardour to contend for the free and sovereign grace of God. We see again John, who leaned upon his Master's bosom, and drank in large draughts of that love which dwelt without measure in the Son of God, breathing love in every line. His grand text is, "God is love"; and his whole soul

seems to be imbued with the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. We find James plain and practical, speaking strongly against the empty professors of his day, and contending that faith must have its accompanying works, in order to prove that it is the "faith of God's elect."

We see Jude searching, keen, and discriminating: drawing his sword boldly against the Antinomians that infested the church, those "spots in their feasts of charity;" yet contending "for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," and that the elect were "sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." We find Peter carrying clear and decisive marks of having been in the furnace. We see the fiery ardour which once prompted him to draw his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus, tamed and subdued; we see him breathing a spirit of love, his soul having been baptized in suffering; and he writes as one who in the furnace of affliction had been purged of the tin and dross which appeared once so conspicuously in him. And yet with all these differences, one and the same Spirit taught each and all, and one and the same gospel was preached in the power and love of it by each and all.

Peter, then, as one who had been in the furnace, closes his first epistle with this affectionate prayer: "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." And as there may be some, perhaps many present, who may hear my voice tonight for the last time during this visit, I do not know that I can leave a better text for their consideration, if the Lord is pleased to bring it home to the heart, than the words I have just read.

I will then, with God's blessing, endeavour to take up the words in the order they lie before me.

I.—The first word which demands our attention is, "the God of all grace." The apostle by this expression leads the mind up to the Source of all mercy. He does not, as a finishing stroke to the truths he had been setting forth, as a practical guard lest the doctrines

of grace should be abused, exhort, by way of application, those to whom he was writing to use unceasing diligence, to cultivate active piety, and employ every exertion to maintain their Christian standing. He leaves nothing to the assiduity of the creature, but leads them up to "the God of all grace," as the only Source and Fountain of all spiritual strength. Nor is he contented with saying "the God of grace," but "the God of all grace." Everything, then, spiritually felt in the conscience; everything experimentally tasted, handled, and enjoyed; everything whereby we are separated from the world dead in sin: everything that saves the soul from the wrath to come, and brings it into the eternal enjoyment of a Three-One God is comprehended in the expression, "the God of all grace."

As the Lord leads his people into a knowledge of themselves, as he removes the veil of deceit from their heart, as he discovers to them more plainly the deep corruption that lurks and works in their bosom, he shews them more and more not only their need of grace, but opens up more and more to them what grace is. When the Lord first begins his work on the conscience, and brings us to know a measure of the truth, we are but learners in the school of grace. It is only after we have travelled some years in the way, and have had repeated discoveries of our baseness, and of God's superabounding mercy, that we begin to enter a little into what grace really is. We learn the words first, and the meaning of them afterwards. We usually receive the doctrine of grace as it stands in the letter of truth first; and then, as the Lord leads us, we get into the experience of grace in the power of it. Thus we gradually learn what grace is by feeling its complete suitability to our pressing wants.

When, for instance, we feel what numerous and aggravated sins we are daily and hourly committing, we want grace, and not merely grace, but "all grace," to pardon and blot them out. When we painfully feel how we daily backslide from God, and are perpetually roving after idols; how our hearts get entangled in the world, and how little our affections are fixed where Jesus sits at the right

hand of the Father, we need "all grace" to heal these backslidings, and to bring the soul into the enjoyment of the mercy and love of God. And when we see what base returns we make to the Lord for all his kindness towards us; when our rebelliousness, fretfulness, impatience, and ingratitude are charged home upon the conscience, and we feel what wretches we are, how we have requited the Lord for all his goodness towards us, we experience our need of "all grace" to forgive such base ingratitude. When we can scarcely bear ourselves, as if none were so vile, none so filthy, none so black as we, we are brought to see and feel it must be "all grace" that can bear with us. So that we not only see the sweetness and suitability of grace, but a far greater sweetness and suitability in "all grace."

For we find that unless it were "all grace" we must perish after all: unless it were "all grace," after all we have tasted and known, felt, experienced, or realized, we must lie down in sorrow, because we are so continually sinning against grace that we must needs wear it out. As, suppose by way of illustration, a father might put into the hands of a friend, or a banker, a certain sum for his son: a certain, fixed, definite amount: so God had stored up in Christ a certain amount of mercy and grace for his children. I have no hesitation in saying, that had such been the case, such prodigal wretches are we, that long ago we should have drawn out and spent the whole stock, whatever might have been the amount; yea, had millions of grace, so to speak, been laid up in Christ, such improvident, reckless, and sinful wretches are we, that we should long ago have spent every farthing of it.

Therefore, he leads us not to look at grace only, however sweet and suitable; nor even to "all grace," though sweeter and more suitable still; but leads us up through and beyond grace to "the God of all grace." As though he might say, "Grace might be exhausted, and even 'all grace' might sooner or later be drained dry; but the 'God of all grace,' the same yesterday, today, and for ever, is an everflowing fountain." A tank may be exhausted, but a fountain is inexhaustible. So "the God of all grace" is "the fountain of living

waters," ever flowing forth in streams of mercy, love, and compassion to his people in Christ. Nothing, then, less than "the God of all grace," could suit such vile wretches as they feel themselves to be. None but "the God of all grace," could bear with them. None but he whose grace can never be exhausted, whose patience can never be worn out, whose lovingkindness can never be provoked beyond endurance: but who pardons all, loves through all, and is determined, in spite of all, to bring the objects of his love to the eternal enjoyment of himself—none but such a God as he who has revealed himself in the face, person, blood, and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, could ever save such guilty and filthy wretches, as some of us see and feel ourselves to be.

II.—We have taken a glimpse at the Fountain, and we will now look at the streams. The first stream that flows out in the text, and prominently catches our eye, is,

Effectual calling: "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus." Calling is the first step in the divine life, the first stream of ever-flowing and overflowing grace that visits the heart: it is therefore put by the apostle at the head of all blessings. But what is calling? It implies a word spoken, in a similar though not in the same way as the Lord called Samuel, when he had laid himself down to sleep in the temple, and said, "Samuel, Samuel!" So the Lord calls his people. I do not mean to say that he addresses them with an audible voice: but he speaks his own word into their conscience with the same authority and power that called Samuel when he was lying asleep before the ark. The call aroused Samuel from sleep, as the spiritual call arouses the soul from the sleep of sin; the word is felt with power in the heart: the truth comes with authority into the conscience: spiritual life is communicated: and certain fruits and effects at once follow.

But what are these fruits and effects? The first effect is, to call us out of the world; for in the world we are till God is pleased to call us out of it. He calls us, then, out of the company of the world, out of its amusements, out of its sinful practices, and out of its no

less sinful and sensual spirit. By communicating a new nature, and imparting light and life to the soul, he shews us what an evil world it is; as the apostle says, "Who gave himself for us, that he might deliver us from this present evil world." In the world there is nothing to be seen and heard but "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;" and God, touching our conscience with his finger, and raising up his fear in our hearts, calls us so effectually out of these lusts, that we can never again intermingle with any peace of conscience with it. Until this step is taken in living faith and godly fear, there is no manifested interest in the promise, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" 2Co 6:17,18.

But God, in calling his people, does not merely call them out of the world dead in wickedness, but he calls them, sooner or later, out of the religious world, the world dead in profession. Not that, for the most part, we are immediately called out of this world within a world; for the Lord does not usually open our eyes at first to see the miserable deceit and hypocrisy of the great bulk of professors. In our ignorance, we think at first that every one who talks about conversion and regeneration is a child of God: and even our heart perhaps has flowed out with love and affection to some whom at the time we thought Christians, but whom we afterwards found to have neither part nor lot in the matter.

But after a time, as the Lord leads the soul into a deeper knowledge of itself, and into a spiritual acquaintance with the law and gospel; as his word of truth is felt with more power in our hearts, and he brings the soul into a more experimental knowledge of his kingdom of grace, we find no more communion with the great bulk of the religious world than with the profane world. We want the power, whilst they are satisfied with the form; we want realities, whilst they are contented with shadows; we want life, and a feeling experience of the love and goodness of God in the soul; they are

satisfied with mere doctrines, as they stand in the letter of truth.

Again: We are often sad, and feel that none but the Lord can speak comfort; we are often cast down by sin, tried in our minds, and exercised in our souls; we feel at times heavy burdens, and suffer under painful and oozing wounds; but they are dead to all life and feeling, either of spiritual sorrow or joy; they are cheerful, easy, and light-hearted, and satisfied with a name to live. Sooner or later, therefore, we come out of the professing world, with as clear a call and as good a conscience as we came at first out of the world dead in trespasses and sins; and set our faces against hypocrisy and a lifeless profession, as much as against vice and open profanity.

But in calling us, first out of the profane, and then out of the professing world, God calls us to the experimental knowledge of certain blessed truths, which can only be spiritually known by the power of the Holy Ghost.

1. He calls us, first, to repent of our sins. "Repent, and believe the gospel," was the first proclamation that issued from the lips of incarnate Truth: and that same word is still spoken as the first call to the heart of all the subjects of God's kingdom. This call, not merely reaches their ears outwardly, for "many," in that sense, "are called." but its power reaches their heart, and they are brought to genuine repentance for sin. How many people there are who begin with religion, and leap over repentance! who adopt into their creed certain doctrines which they hear from the mouths of ministers or gather from books, and leap out of the world into the highest assurance, without ever passing through the "strait gate" and "narrow way!" But Christ has placed repentance as the first step into his kingdom: so that he who never knew what repentance unto life was, is not a partaker of the life of God in his soul. But wherever there is repentance as a fruit of the Spirit, there will be a sense and sight of sin, a knowledge of its dreadful evil, a feeling of guilt before a holy God, a mourning and grieving on account of it, and a deep sense of inward vileness before the eyes of Infinite Purity.

2. But God calls his people not merely to repentance, but to

confession also. When the Spirit works repentance in the heart, it does not lie there dead and torpid; but it issues forth from the lips in genuine and honest confession. The spiritual penitent tells the Lord, with tears rolling down his cheeks, with sobs heaving from his bosom, with repeated expressions of condemnation, what a wretch he has been, how vilely he has behaved toward him, and what a base, horrible, and filthy creature he has been in his pure eyes. And this, not once or twice in his life, not once or twice a year, but continually as the Lord works a feeling of repentance in the heart, and brings it forth in godly confession, does he honestly tell him, though he knows it all, the sad tale of self-condemnation.

3. But the Lord calls his people not merely to confess, but also to forsake those sins of which they repent. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" Pr 28:13. There is a forsaking of evil, a turning away from idols, a leaving of broken cisterns, and a fleeing out of those sins which are laid upon the conscience. And this takes place, in a greater or less degree, when God chastises his people with inward rebukes for sin, and his frown is felt in the soul. There are many that act, as Bunyan speaks of the mother that calls her child a little slut and all sorts of names, and then the next moment falls to hugging and kissing it. Many who stand high in a profession speak of themselves as sinners, and profess to hate sin, yet the next moment plunge without a pang into the very iniquities of which they profess to have repented. But God's people, under the powerful teachings of the Spirit, not merely repent of and confess, but forsake too those sins that are laid upon their conscience, and cry unto the Lord to keep them from the power of evil.

4. The Lord, in calling his people, calls them also to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. "Repent, and believe the gospel," he says to them with power. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." He opens their eyes to see a crucified Jesus, and draws their hearts to come unto him, as "mighty to save." He reveals to their understanding the Media-

tor between God and man, the great High Priest over the house of God, "Immanuel, God with us!" He brings into their souls a taste of his dying love, and a sight by faith of his atoning blood. Thus he enables them to believe in the Son of God, and to receive him into their hearts as all their salvation and all their desire.

5. He calls them too, to eye his only-begotten Son as a suffering Jesus; to look upon him whom they have pierced, and to mourn for him; to behold the evil of sin in the bleeding, agonizing Saviour; and thus to be melted down into godly sorrow, that their sins should have caused the sweat to issue from his sacred body, and the groans of agony to burst from his dying lips.

6. He calls them also to walk as becometh the gospel, to live consistently and uprightly, and to "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things;" to exercise themselves to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man; and thus manifest that they are "living epistles, written not with ink," in the mere letter of truth, "but with the Spirit of the living God." He calls them also to walk in "his ordinances blameless," and not, under the pretext of greater spirituality, to despise any of them.

7. But, above all, he calls them "unto his eternal glory:" that when this short life has passed away, when "time shall be no longer" to them, they may see Jesus as he is in the realms of endless, day, may eternally partake of that bliss which is laid up for them at God's right hand, and behold and be partakers of Christ's glory.

III.—But the next step in the kingdom of grace laid down in the text, the next stream that issues out of the everflowing fountain of grace, is, suffering: "After that ye have suffered a while."

In calling his people, God calls them all to suffer. "Unto you," says the apostle, "it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" Php 1:29. "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" Ro 8:17.

Thus, after the Lord, by his special work on the conscience, has called us to repentance and confession of sin, as well as to faith in Jesus: after he has called us to godly sorrow; to live according to the

precepts of the gospel: and to walk in the ordinances of his church; he then calls us to suffer for and with Christ. But we cannot "suffer according to the will of God," that is, in a gospel sense and from gospel motives, till the Lord enables us in some measure to look to him. The same Spirit, who calls the believer to walk in a path of suffering, strengthens and enables him to do so.

To suffer then aright, we must walk in the steps of the great Captain of our salvation, who "though a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." The Father in this sense spared not his only-begotten Son, but led him into the path of tribulation. If the Lord of the house, then, had to travel in this dark and gloomy path of suffering, can his disciples escape? If the Captain of our salvation was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" must not the common soldiers, who occupy the ranks of the spiritual army, be baptized into the same sufferings, and taste in their measure of that cup which he drank to the very dregs? Thus, every child of God is called, sooner or later, to "suffer with Christ;" and he that suffers not with Christ, will not reign with him 2Ti 2:12. But the Lord, who sees what we are, as well as what we need, apportions out suffering to our several states and necessities. All certainly do not suffer in the same way, nor to the same extent, though all travel, in their measure, in that path. Paths of different length, and different depth and height, branch out, so to speak, of the great highway of tribulation, and in one or other of these paths all the redeemed must walk.

Thus, some of the Lord's people suffer more than others from the depths of their own dreadful nature being opened up to them with greater clearness and power; they are more distressed by painful convictions, are more exercised with distressing doubts and fears, and spend most of their days in a gloomy desponding state.

Others, again, of God's people suffer more from Satan's fierce temptations; he is permitted to hurl his fiery darts with greater violence into their souls; and, as a roaring lion, he seeks to rend the very caul of their hearts. Others of the family of faith suffer more

from the hidings of God's countenance; they have to mourn His absence whose presence they have felt and tasted to be their heaven. Others, more sensibly feel his chastening hand in their conscience. Others, again, suffer more from open persecution; the world is allowed to vent its spleen and malice more upon them; their friends or relations are more bitter against them; and thus their tribulation is more in the way of outward persecution than in those inward trials into which God leads others of his people. Again, others are more harassed by the workings of inward sin; more snares seem spread for their feet; they are more violently assailed by secret lusts, and feel the power of sin more sensibly raging for dominion in their carnal mind. But however the suffering may differ, all have to suffer, all have to pass through the furnace: for the Lord bringeth "the third part through the fire." All have to walk in the footsteps of a self-denying and crucified Jesus; all have painfully to feel what it is to be at times under the rod, and experience those chastisements of God, whereby they are proved to be sons, and not bastards.

IV.—But this suffering is for a while, "after that ye have suffered a while." It is only for a time that God's people suffer; though they suffer at different times of their pilgrimage, there are occasional remissions. There is a certain needful time for suffering to last, as there is a certain "needs be" for the suffering itself. And when they have suffered the time needful to purge away their tin and dross, God takes them out of the furnace:

V.—And this leads us to the fruits and consequences of this suffering, "After that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."

There is no Christian perfection, no divine establishment, no spiritual strength, no solid settlement, except by suffering. But after the soul has suffered, after it has felt God's chastising hand, the effect is to perfect, to establish, to strengthen, and to settle it. Let us look at these several points in their order.

1. "Make you perfect." What perfection does the Holy Ghost speak of here? Certainly not perfection in the flesh: that is but a

wild dream of free-will and Arminianism. But perfection here and elsewhere means a being well-established and grounded in the faith, as we find the apostle speaking Heb 5:14, "Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age literally, as we read in the margin, "perfect", even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Christian perfection does not then consist in perfection in the flesh, but in having arrived at maturity in the divine life, in being what I may call a Christian adult, or what the apostle terms, "a man in Christ." When Paul, therefore, says, "Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect," he means being "no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine," but favoured with a measure of Christian wisdom and strength. It is this Christian maturity, which is called in scripture, "perfection," and it is only obtained by suffering. It is only in the furnace that the tin and dross of pharisaic righteousness is purged away; and the soul comes out of the furnace "a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use." The Lord of life and glory was made "perfect through sufferings;" and there is no other way whereby his followers are made spiritually perfect. Until a man is led into suffering, he does not know the truth in its sweetness. We are full of free-will, pride, presumption, and self-righteousness. But when the soul is baptized into suffering, it is in a measure established in the truth, strengthened in the things of God, and conformed to the image of Christ.

2. The next fruit and effect of suffering is, establishment. The soul by sufferings and deliverances becomes established in a sense of its own interest in divine things: it becomes more delivered from doubts and fears. Suffering makes a man established in the truth, by causing him to feel and realize more of its power, sweetness, and unction in his heart. But till a man goes into the furnace, to have his fleshly wisdom, strength, and righteousness burnt off from him, there is no divine establishment of soul. He scarcely knows what he believes, and scarcely discerns the difference betwixt what God has taught him, and what he has learned from man: he is not

brought to feel clearly and accurately the difference between form and power, substance and shadow, letter and spirit. But when afflictions and troubles come upon him, he becomes not merely established in his judgment in a knowledge of the letter of truth, but established in his soul by an experience of it.

3. The third fruit and effect of suffering mentioned in the text is, strength. Until a man goes into the furnace of affliction and suffering, to have his own fleshly strength burnt out, he is never divinely strengthened in his soul.

Having, therefore, as yet a measure of creature strength, he does not need the strength of Christ to be "made perfect in weakness." But when he has been in the furnace, and suffered awhile, and found his own strength like tow before the flame, and feels utterly unable to resist sin and Satan unless God is pleased to strengthen him with strength in his "inner man," he comes to the Lord as a poor needy supplicant for a measure of divine strength. He is no more looking to the flesh, no more going down to Egypt and Assyria, and leaning on a reed that runs into the hand, and pierces it; but is brought, in a measure of believing simplicity, to look to the Lord to perfect strength in his weakness.

4. The fourth and last fruit of suffering mentioned in the text is, divine settlement. This intimates a freedom from wandering here and there, and wavering to and fro, from being "driven with the wind and tossed," as James speaks Jas 1:6, "like a wave of the sea." By suffering a man becomes settled into a solemn conviction of the character of Jehovah as revealed in the scripture, and in a measure made experimentally manifest in his conscience. He is settled in the belief of an "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure:" in the persuasion that "all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose;" in the firm conviction that everything comes to pass according to God's eternal purpose: and are all tending to the good of the church, and to God's eternal glory. His soul, too, is settled down into a deep persuasion of the misery, wretchedness, and emptiness of the crea-

ture; into the conviction that the world is but a shadow, and that the things of time and sense are but bubbles that burst the moment they are grasped; that of all things sin is most to be dreaded, and the favour of God above all things most to be coveted; that nothing is really worth knowing except Jesus Christ and him crucified; that all things are passing away, and that he himself is rapidly hurrying down the stream of life, and into the boundless ocean of eternity. Thus he becomes settled in a knowledge of the truth, and his soul remains at anchor, looking to the Lord to preserve him here, and bring him in peace and safety to his eternal home.

These are the fruits of suffering. They are not to be learnt by reading them in the word of God, or by hearing ministers preach about them; nor are they to be obtained from books, or from any source, but the teaching of the Spirit of God in the soul. Where God then teaches, he “teaches to profit;” he writes his truth with “the point of a diamond” on the heart, and engraves them as “with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever.”

But if you took at the form in which the text is couched, you will perceive that the apostle, in using these words, utters them not so much as an exhortation, as a prayer offered up to God in their behalf; for he knew well that the God of all grace could alone do all these things for them. He speaks as an “elder;” and while writing to the people of God, his whole soul and affections seem warmed towards them: he therefore lifts up his heart unto the Lord, and beseeches “the God of all grace” to do this blessed work on their conscience, and to make them “perfect, to stablish, strengthen, and settle them.”

We see then here, my friends, the path in which God leads his people. All we have and are, everything we know and feel, comes from “the God of all grace.” We have nothing spiritually good in ourselves; all therefore that we have is the free gift of his hand, and comes from the everflowing Fountain of mercy and truth. It will be our mercy then, as the Lord may enable us, to be ever looking to him, not looking to books, not looking to ministers; these are

only instruments, and in themselves but poor instruments. The soul must look through all and above all to “the God of all grace.” Since I have been in Town this visit, hundreds perhaps may have heard my voice, but you must not look to me, or any man to teach and bless your soul. The Lord enable you to look to him alone as “the God of all grace,” to seek him in secret, to pour out your hearts before him, and to call on his blessed name, that he would lead your souls into a knowledge of “the truth as it is in Jesus.” The Lord enable you to examine every truth as it is brought before you by the light of God’s Spirit in your heart, to “prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.”

And however deeply some here may feel the vileness of their hearts, remember this, my friends, there is “the God of all grace” to go to. If you feel yourselves the vilest of sinners, he suits you the more as “the God of all grace.” If you feel dark, stupid, and barren, it is the greater reason that you should call on “the God of all grace” to revive your drooping soul. If any here have lost past enjoyments, and are now “walking in darkness” that may be felt, it is the more reason they should seek “the God of all grace,” that he may supply their wants out of Christ’s fulness, as the covenant head. Yea, whatever trials, perplexities, and temptations may harass your soul, it is only to open the way for “the God of all grace” to appear. In whatever affliction you may be, it will be your wisdom, as it will be your mercy, to be looking up unto him, that he may comfort your soul; and, turning from man, as Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, commit your case to him.

Remember this then, if “the God of all grace” has indeed “called you unto his eternal glory”—if he has indeed touched your heart with his blessed finger—remember you will have to walk, from beginning to end, in a path of suffering: for the whole path, more or less, is a path of tribulation. And, while walking in this path, and suffering from sin, Satan, the world, and the evil of your own heart, it is only to lead you up more unto “the God of all grace:” it is only that God may, in his own time, “make you perfect, stablish,

strengthen, settle you.” And when your soul has passed through these trials, you will see God’s hand in all praise him for all, and will perceive how good it was for you to have been afflicted, and to have walked in this painful path: that having suffered with Christ Jesus, you might sit down with him in his eternal glory!

May “the God of all grace,” then who hath called some of you to “his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” And into his blessed hands, with sincere desires for your spiritual welfare, do I desire now and ever to commit both you and myself.

53 DIVINE SEPARATION

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, London, on
Lord’s Day Morning,
13th August, 1843

“For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.” Exodus 33:16

I think the transaction recorded in this chapter is the most remarkable of any that we find in the history of the children of Israel. Consider the circumstances and what preceded this divine interview betwixt Moses and God. It was after the children of Israel had made and worshipped the golden calf, after they had so sadly provoked the Lord by their base idolatry, that he suffers himself to be prevailed upon by the prayers of Moses, the typical Mediator, to shew forth his mercy and grace; and not, as he speaks, to “consume them in the way”.

What was it, then, which peculiarly called forth these words from the mouth of Moses? The Lord had said to him: “Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out

of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I sware unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (Exod. 33:1.)

The Lord put, as it were, by this speech, the children of Israel into the hand of Moses. It is as though he had thus spoken: "I will indeed fulfil my promise. I said I would take them into the land of Canaan; I will do so; but I will do no more; I renounce the direct charge of them; they have so provoked me to anger that, though I will fulfil my promise, so that none shall call me an unfaithful God, yet I will do no more than I have promised to Abraham. Do thou take them up; do thou lead them; do thou receive this charge at my hands; for I relinquish it." Now this was the most cutting stroke that God could have given to Moses: for his soul was so deeply penetrated and possessed, as every child of God's is, with a sense of his own helplessness and nothingness, that such a speech as this from the mouth of the Lord seemed a death-blow to all his hopes; and it was this, therefore, that led him to plead so earnestly with the Lord that he would do more than barely fulfil his promise by taking them to the land of Canaan. He says, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence", as though he would sooner stay where he was, and die in the wilderness, without moving a single step forward; as though he would rather God did not fulfil his promise at all, than deny them his presence, and not go up with them.

And thus Moses, as the Psalmist says, "stood before him in the breach." (Ps. 106:23.) He was the typical Mediator; and the Lord condescended to hear his prayer, and assured him that "His presence should go with him, and that he would give him rest". This sweet promise led Moses to put up the prayer contained in the text, that affectionate and powerful plea with Jehovah. "Wherein," he says, "shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth."

I think, in these words, we may find four distinct steps of di-

vine leading poured out.

I.—The original source and fountain of all the blessings the soul enjoys in time or eternity, “finding grace in God’s sight”.

II.—The fruit of finding grace—that the Lord, by his presence, goes up with the soul.

III.—The knowledge of the Lord’s manifest presence, both in the souls of those that receive it, and in the consciences of others. “Wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight.”

IV.—The fruit and effect of God’s manifested presence—separation. “So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.”

I. We will look, then, with God’s blessing, first, at the original source and fountain of every spiritual blessing that the soul receives in time or for eternity. It is all couched in that one expression, “finding grace in God’s sight”. It was said of Noah, “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” (Gen. 6:8.) The rest of the world did not find that grace. It does not say that Noah obtained acceptance with God on the score of merit, or on the footing of his own good works. The only reason why Noah and his family were preserved in the ark, whilst the rest of the world were swallowed up in the waters of the deluge, was this, that “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord”.

(i) But the very expression itself will bear to be analysed, for there is a sweet vein of truth in every word of it. First, then, the word grace. What is “grace”? It is the free, unmerited favour of God in the person, blood, and righteousness of Jesus, manifested to the vessels of mercy. There is nothing, indeed, more easy than to pick up a few sound notions about grace; and perhaps there are few persons in this chapel who are wholly ignorant in their judgment of what “grace” means; but when we come to a vital experience of it, to a real spiritual knowledge of it, as brought into the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, then we see a wide distinction betwixt a mere notional acquaintance with grace in the judgment,

and a spiritual and supernatural reception of grace into the soul.

The seat of free-will is not so much a man's head as a man's heart; and, therefore, a few notional opinions about grace in the head can never touch the seat of the disease. If I have a wound in my head, there is no use putting a plaster on my arm; if I have an affection in my heart, there is no use prescribing for a pain in my head; we must have the remedy just where the malady is. Now that wretched spawn of free-will, that proud opinion of merit, that miserable self-righteousness, which is the very element of creature religion, has its seat in the heart; and, therefore, out of the heart does it continually pour forth its poisonous breath. In order, then, to give a mortal stab to this self-righteousness, in order to pluck up by the very roots, and pull away the quivering fibres of this wretched free-will, which is interwoven with every nerve, vein, and artery of our nature, we must have the power of God to come into our heart. In order then, to understand, feel, and appreciate what grace is, we must first learn the depth of our ruin, we must know the plague and leprosy of sin, and thus come into that spot of which the Lord speaks by his prophet—"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." (Isai. 1:5, 6.) To stand before God a mass of filth and corruption; to feel that it is almost impossible that God can ever look down with pity and love upon such a wretch; to believe that there would be as much mercy for Satan himself, if there were not a Mediator who has taken our flesh into union with himself—to have some of these painful feelings wrought into his heart will teach a man his need of grace.

Now, till a man has grace in his heart, there is no use putting a few notional opinions about grace into his head. His heart will still be fortified in free-will and self-righteousness, until a firm stab is made at the conscience, and until there is a real home-thrust by the sword of God himself into the soul, so as to cut asunder the very nerves and sinews of creature merit, and delusive hopes.

It is then no longer a mere parrot sound with him but it is the very marrow of vital godliness lodged in his soul, and sweeter to him than honey or the honey-comb. And if a man does not get hold of grace in this way, he had better be an Arminian at once, and stand forth in his true colours, a free-willer in head as he is a free-willer in heart, a Pharisee to the backbone, without the mask of a Calvinistic professor.

(ii) Now this grace is “found.” It is not earned, nor merited, nor worked into; but it is found; and if a man never “found” it, he never had it. It is stumbled upon, so to speak, as the Lord sets forth in the parable of the man who found the treasure hid in a field. (Matt. 13:44.) The man was not thinking about the treasure. He was, we may suppose, ploughing in the field. He had no idea that there was gold beneath the clods. But he finds it all on a sudden, in the most unexpected and unlooked-for manner, and for joy thereof “goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field”. So it is with the way in which grace is found. It comes so suddenly, so unexpectedly, and so sweetly into a man’s soul, that when it comes he is like a man who has found something which he had no inception of till he had found it. He had no idea what it was, nor how it was to be got, nor whence it was to be had; but when it came into his heart he found that he had a treasure there. The treasure which the man found in the field was much sweeter to him, because unexpectedly found, than if he had earned it penny by penny. Its coming in so peculiar a way, from the surprise and joy produced, doubled and trebled the value of the money. Thus, when grace visits the earth in an unexpected moment, and drops down like the dew of heaven into the soul, it is valued much more than if laboriously earned penny by penny. The sweetness of the gift is doubled by its unexpectedness, and by its coming in such a marvellous and miraculous manner.

(iii) The expression, too “in God’s sight,” adds great sweetness to the word “find;” as though God’s eyes never could see anything but grace on behalf of his people; as though, when he looks upon

his elect, he does not look upon them as they often look upon themselves, but as they stand in Christ. When we look upon ourselves, we often see ourselves the most stupid, the most ignorant, the most vile, the most unworthy, the most earthly and sensual wretches that God can permit to live; at least, that is the view we take of ourselves when we are really humbled in our own eyes.

But God does not so view his people; they “have found grace in his sight”; he views them as they stand in the covenant of grace, “complete in Christ”, accepted in the beloved “without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing”. Though he sees, so far as to chastise their sins and backslidings, yet, in viewing their persons, he beholds them as they stand in the holiness and righteousness of their Covenant Head. And thus they “find grace in his sight” the eyes of the Father being so taken up with the beauty and glory of his only-begotten Son, that his eyes being perpetually fixed upon Him, they are perpetually fixed upon his people as they stand in Him. And thus he does not see his people as they often see themselves, full of wounds, and bruises and putrefying sores but clothed in the perfection, beauty, and loveliness of their head and husband; and thus “they find grace in his sight”.

II.—But what is the fruit and consequence of finding “grace in God’s sight”, as stated in the text? It is this—that God goes up with them—“For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us?” Moses was not satisfied with the doctrine that he and the people had found grace in God’s sight. If Moses could have been contented with the mere doctrine of justification: if he had been a dry doctrinal Calvinist, we never should have had this prayer from his lips; he would have said “O, all is right; the everlasting covenant stands ordered in all things and sure:’ God’s people can never come short of the promised inheritance: they are all sure to get safe to Canaan; for God’s promises must ever stand”. But as he was not a dead, dry doctrinalist, he was begging and crying for the presence of God in his soul. He was nor satisfied with a notional opinion about God’s

presence, nor a doctrinal sentiment about finding grace in his sight—that would not do for his poor cast-down soul: but he cried, “If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence”. As though he had said, “Let me die where I am, rather than go forward, if thy presence does not go with me”.

And then he says, “Wherein shall it be known?” What proof will there be, what testimony, that we have found grace in thy sight? For, Lord, it does not satisfy our souls that thou tellest us we have found grace in thy sight, unless thou dost something more? Thou must go up with us”. He appeals to the Lord himself, and asks him the very question, “Is there any other way whereby it can be known that we have found grace in thy sight? Is not this the grand manifestation of it? Is not this the way that it is opened up and made known to our consciences, in “that thou goest up with us?” You may depend upon it, then, that every soul taught by Moses’ God, and blessed with the same spiritual power and presence which he was blessed with will never be satisfied with the mere notion, with the bare knowledge, that God’s people have “found grace in his sight”, unless the Lord specially manifest it in his heart and conscience, so as to go up with him experimentally in his soul.

But see where Moses and the children of Israel had to go to, and what a path they had to walk in, to get there. A waste howling wilderness lay before their eyes, where were fiery flying serpents, and perpetual drought, with a burning sun above, and a scorching sand beneath, in which they must inevitably and speedily perish unless the Lord gave miraculous supplies. All therefore—their very existence—depended wholly and solely upon this point, whether the Lord went up with them; if he did not go with them, no manna would fall from heaven, no water would gush out of the rock, and Jordan could not be passed, nor the promised land won. So God’s people, whose eyes are spiritually enlightened, to see their own helplessness, feebleness, and wretchedness, are brought to feel, the Lord must go with them every step of the way, and lead them, and shine upon them, or, with all they have known and experienced,

they must utterly faint by the way.

What a death-blow does such a text as this give to all dead notional assurance! Who had ever seen the power of God so signally and miraculously displayed as these children of Israel? What an experience they had to look back upon! Can any notional professor in our day bring forward an equal or similar one? Brought out of Egypt with a high hand; carried by a miracle through the Red Sea, their enemies overwhelmed in its deep waters before their eyes; fed by daily supplies of manna, and drinking day by day miraculous draughts out of "the rock that followed them", might they not have folded their arms and said, "We are sure to get to Canaan. Why do we want the Lord's presence to go up with us? Our past experience is enough; and surely, we can rest upon the doctrine". No; Moses could not rest upon a doctrine, however true. He must have the Lord's felt presence to accompany him, or he would rather die, and not go a step further. And thus whatever God's people may have experienced in times past; if the Lord leave them, down they sink into all the deathliness, carnality, and wretchedness which they felt before. He must appear as much to their souls now for every fresh difficulty as he appeared to their souls before in former difficulties; nor can they take a single step aright unless he work in them "to will and to do of his good pleasure".

This going up of the Lord, experimentally with the soul, is in some sense a feeling of his presence, some clear testimony that the Lord is upon its side. But how was this brought about in the experience of the children of Israel? By one continual tissue of miracles it was that the Lord manifested his presence among them. It was not trifles that called forth his power, but such difficulties as nothing but a miraculous interposition could remove. And what a wisdom there was in God's leading his people through the wilderness! If they had gone through a cultivated land, where they could have sown and reaped their harvests, and lived on their flocks and herds, would God's miraculous interposition have been continually required? But their being led through the wilderness, "a land that

was not sown," (Jer. 2:2.) made them want a miracle at every step. So it is with God's people spiritually and experimentally during their earthly pilgrimage. Could their own wisdom find out, or their own strength enable them to walk in God's way when found, they would not want to have miracles displayed on their behalf. Free-will, indeed, infidelity and unbelief, reject miracles as matters of spiritual experience. Their way is a reasonable way; but the way by which God takes his people to heaven is an unreasonable way. The way in which free-will and self-righteousness walk is a natural way; the way in which God leads his children is a supernatural way. The road which sense and reason treads, is a common-place, every-day, turnpike road; but the path into which God guides his people is an out-of-the-way, hidden path, which the vulture's eye hath not seen, and so beset with difficulties, that well nigh every step of their journey requires a miracle to be performed. I do not mean an external miracle, such as Christ wrought in the days of his flesh, but an internal miracle in soul experience. There are, for instance, blind inward eyes to be opened, deaf hearts and ears to be unstopped, paralytic soul-joints to be strengthened, spiritual enemies to be overcome, powerful temptations to be subdued, a heart of stone to be taken away, and a heart of flesh given; and God's mercy and grace to superabound over all the aboundings of sin. The people of God find every step they take so beset with exercises and trials, and they have such a dead, stupid, unfeeling, unbelieving, proud, ignorant, self-righteous heart, that, though they may see the way in which they should walk, they cannot, in their own strength, take a single step in it; and thus they find and feel that, before they can take a single step forward, God must give their feet and ankle-bones strength. (Acts 3:7.)

Before they can see an inch before their eyes, the Lord must give them spiritual eyesight; so that if they feel any softening, or melting down of spirit, or any sense of God's gracious presence, it is as much an internal miracle wrought in their heart as when God opened the windows of heaven, and dropped down the miracu-

lous supply of manna for the children of Israel. Feeling, then, as all God's people do feel, what an intricate, dark, mysterious path they have to walk in, and how unable they are to take a single step forward, except as God takes hold of their foot, and puts it down for them in the road; and how helpless to lift up a hand, except as the everlasting arms lift it up for them; they are absolutely as unable to go forward in the life and walk of faith, without the Lord's going up with them, as the children of Israel would have been in the wilderness, had the supply of manna and of water been suddenly withheld.

III.—But we pass on to consider the knowledge of this. "Wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight". Moses pleads with the Lord upon this footing—"how shall it be known?" We find Moses often making use of this argument, as—"Wherefore (Ex. 32:12) should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains", as though—I speak it with reverence—he would touch God's honour; as though he would say, "Lord, think of thine own character; consider thine own glorious name. What will be said against thee, and against thy faithfulness, if thine anger be hot against them, and thou consume them as thou hast threatened?" He appeals to God's jealousy for his own glory and honour; so that we may paraphrase his words thus, "Lord, thou hast brought us out of Egypt; hast divided the Red Sea into parts; hast led us step by step up to this moment. Now, Lord, if we never reach Jordan, and never enter the land of promise, but pine and die in the wilderness, because thou wilt no longer go up with us, what will be said by thine and our enemies? How shall it be known that thou art our God? Egypt and Canaan will rejoice when they learn that we have perished by the way".

Now, I believe this is the way in which God's people sometimes plead with him. "Lord, what will the enemies of truth say if thou leavest me when I need thy special succour? If, when I come to die, for instance, thou dost not then support my soul, dost not smile

upon my heart, not enable me to leave a blessed testimony behind, if I die in the dark, will not the enemies of truth rejoice!" Or, "Lord, if a temptation assail me, and I am suffered to fall; or if my besetting sin attack me, and I am overcome by it, will it not disgrace thy name and cause?" O, how the soul will sometimes plead with the Lord upon this footing, that it will be, so to speak, a stab at God's honour, and open the mouths of his enemies if he do not this and that for the soul.

Such was Moses' plea in the text. "For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest up with us?" The manifested presence of the Lord in their midst was the only satisfying testimony that they had found grace in his sight. And may we not apply this to ourselves? And I am sure that, if you are the Lord's, nothing but his testimony can satisfy your souls. I am sure nothing can ever satisfy me, either as a Christian or as a minister, but the Lord's own testimony in my conscience.

And this, too, is the way by which it is known, not only to yourselves but to others. For when Moses pleaded with the Lord he was not merely speaking of the personal enjoyment of God's presence in his own conscience, or of the manifestation of it in the hearts of God's people among the children of Israel; he was looking at it in a wider and more general point of view even than that, "Wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth"; that is generally and universally to friend and foe, Egyptian and Canaanite, as well as to the children of Israel. Why the enemies of truth themselves are to have an evidence in their consciences that God is with this people; an unwilling evidence I admit; an evidence in spite of themselves. They must see, by the Lord's crowning the word with his blessing, by his building up to himself a church that walks in all the ordinances of his house blameless, which speaks, lives, and acts in the fear of his great name, and adorns

the doctrine in all things; by your love to each other; by the image of Christ stamped upon your hearts, lips, and lives—I say, even our enemies must be silenced, if not satisfied, if such testimony of God's favour and presence are found among you. As David said of old, "Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed; because thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me." (Ps. 86:17.) And, again—"The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish" (Ps. 112:10.)

IV.—But what is the grand manifested effect of all this work in the conscience? Separation. "So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth". The effect, then, of the Lord's going up with the soul, is separation—and, mark, universal separation—"from all the people that dwell upon the face of the earth". And what is the cause of this separation? Not only because they believed doctrines different from what the Egyptians believed; not merely because they outwardly worshipped Jehovah when the people of Egypt worshipped bulls, monkeys, birds, and serpents; not only because they had the tabernacle, and the sacrifices, and the ark of the covenant. These were, indeed, reasons for separation, but not the chief; not the one which Moses brings prominently forward in the text. That was the going up of God with them, his manifested presence in their assemblies, and in the hearts of his people. It is these alone which can effectually or vitally separate us from the profane and the professing world. Persons may, indeed, and do separate on other grounds. Some, for instance, separate from a place and people, because the doctrine preached by the minister does not suit them. It is a good ground of separation where God has not caused his own blessed doctrine of grace and truth to drop as the rain, and distil as the dew into the heart of the minister, and therefore he cleaves to Arminianism and free-will. But to separate merely for the sake of doctrine is what a man may do and be still dead in a profession.

Many separations and schisms, again, arise solely from par-

ty spirit. A church falls to quarrelling upon no point of truth or conscience, but on some unimportant trifle, or perhaps malicious report; and they become so embroiled that reconciliation is out of the question; and so the next step is separation; God's glory never sought, his honour never considered, but a wretched party spirit splitting asunder the church, and forming the only ground of separation. But this is, indeed, a most miserable ground. A separation to be upon good grounds must be a separation for truth and conscience; and not merely for truth and conscience, but also for the power of the gospel. Truth and conscience are, indeed, a good ground of separation if a church walk disorderly, or if it slight and despise either of the ordinances of the gospel; but, to make the ground thoroughly firm and sure, and satisfy the soul completely, we must have something more spiritual and experimental even than that. The power and presence of God must have left the place before we can comfortably leave it. And this conclusion will not be hastily come to in a tender conscience. The fault will be again and again charged upon self before it is laid anywhere else. But when, after repeated trials, and after continual crying to the Lord that he would bless the word to our souls, and when, after going again and again, we find that no power or unction rests upon the ministry, but that all is barrenness and death, that will be a sufficient ground for separation from any ministry whatever.

And this is the way in which God's people, for the most part, are separated from dead professors. He brings powerful convictions of sin into their consciences, and creates a hungering and thirsting after felt pardon and peace, and a feeling of discontent and dissatisfaction with everything short of the power of the gospel in the conscience. They are thus usually internally before they are externally separated; they are often wretched and miserable as craving what they cannot obtain, and for a long time perhaps lay the charge on themselves before their eyes are open to see where the fault really lies.

But to separate will often be a hard conflict; and I confess I like

to see a sharp struggle, for I know I had a strong contest about it myself. In these hard struggles we are brought to see and feel things which we never saw or felt before; and when, at last, the cord is effectually cut, you are much surer of your man, and the work is clearer in his conscience than if it had been done in a hurry. I have compared some people's change of religion to a man going to a river to bathe; he stands hesitating awhile upon the bank, and, having mustered sufficient resolution, at length jumps into the water; but he finds it very cold. And what does he do? Why, he sneaks out again, and crawls back upon the bank. So it is with many persons in respect of religion. They jump out of the world into a profession, or out of Arminianism into Calvinism, or out of the Church into Dissent; and when they have jumped in, they find it is not altogether what they expected. Trials, persecutions, temptations assail them; the thing is not so agreeable as they anticipated, and what do they but sneak out again, and stand cold and dripping upon the bank. But, if a man has been led on by degrees, having had "line upon line, and precept upon precept," fastened in his conscience; if the power of truth has been worked into him, grafted into him, planted in him by the hand of God, so as to take a vital root in his soul, he is much more likely to stand in the day of trial than if it had been a thing which he had received in a few hours, a few days, or a few weeks. The religion of the one is like a flower that has a root to it, and which grows in the natural soil; the religion of the other is like a cropped flower, a nose-gay which soon withers away, and is then only fit for the dunghill. "The root of the matter" is in the one, being watered with dew from heaven; and, the God of all grace communicating increase; he will "revive as the corn, and grow as the vine". This religion will not be a deception, like some of the flowers sold in the streets of London; but there is a root to his religion, and therefore it will not be dried up by the sun of temptation, but, being planted in the house of the Lord, will flourish for ever in the courts, of his God.

We ought, then, to weigh well what is the ground of our separa-

tion, whatever it be, and feel well convinced that it is God's work on the conscience, and has sprung from His own teaching in the soul. Persons have said of me sometimes, "O, he will go back; So-and-so has returned after seceding as he has done, and he will do so too". I have sometimes used a homely figure in reply; I have said, "Did you ever see a stagecoach horse, who has been yoked to a coach for some years, until he has been quite broken down, and unable to do his work any longer—did you ever see him voluntarily leave his pasture, where he has been turned out to graze, and yoke himself to the old machine which has worn out his strength?" When a man has had a thing wrought into his conscience with divine power he does not easily forget those lessons. When what he has learnt has been flogged into him, such instruction abides with him, and he is no more able to get that truth out of his heart which God has lodged there, than he is able to get his heart out of his body. If planted there by a miraculous hand, it will abide there by the same miraculous hand keeping it there; as the Lord says, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" (Isa. 27:3.)

Wherever, then, there is a true spiritual separation, it is "from all the people that are upon the face of the earth", that is, from all that do not know the power, from all that do not experience or value the teachings of the Spirit; from all that have "a name to live whilst dead"; from all, whoever they be, that have not the power of truth lodged in the conscience. However near they may approach to the truth, however they may assume the form of godliness, if they deny outwardly or inwardly the power thereof, there must be a separation. And God will justify such a separation by manifesting his presence in the minister's heart and in the people's conscience; for his words are: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. 6:17, 18.) But, remember this, my friends—the inward separation must go first. There is no use

separating in body unless you are separated in spirit. If any of you are sitting under Arminian teachers, or heady notional Calvinists, there must be a heart and conscience separation first, an inward separation wrought into your soul by the power of God, and that will bring about the outward separation.

Till we have the Lord's testimony in our conscience, there will be little felt in all our movements but bondage and death; but when we have the clear warrant and the plain handwriting of heaven in our hearts, we can separate ourselves as freely and comfortably from the great bulk of the professing church as from the profane world; yes, from all but the living family of God; and to them we shall cleave with affection of heart, saying, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" We shall be willing to suffer reproach and shame; yea, at times, "to endure all things for the elect's sake". We shall be willing to cast our lot among the people of God, and feeling a oneness of spirit with them, and a blessed knitting of the soul to them, we shall say "You are my companions; with you I wish to live, and with you I wish to die; for with you I trust my happy soul will live for ever, to sing the praises of the Three-one God".

54 A SUPPLY FOR EVERY NEED

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, London, on Wednesday Evening,

August 16, 1843

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19

¹With what confidence the Apostle speaks here! There is not in his mind the shadow of a doubt: but he declares it as a positive certainty, that his God would supply all their need. Whence arose this confidence? Not from the flesh, we may be well certain. But it

arose from two causes: first, from the deep conviction, lodged by the Holy Ghost in the heart of the Apostle, that God would supply all the wants of his church and people; and secondly, because he had himself experienced, in his own particular case, this gracious and perpetual supply.

But why should both these be necessary? Would not one be sufficient? I think not. Say that the ground of his confidence was his own personal experience, and disjoin that experience of his from the truth which I have said was lodged in his heart that God would supply all the wants of his church; take, I say, that great truth away, and his experience would afford him no solid ground for confidence that God would supply all their wants. Or look at the other side of the question: suppose the doctrinal truth only was lodged in his heart that God would supply all the needs of his church, but that he himself had not a personal experience of that supply, there would still be wanting a sufficient ground of confidence. His confidence would stand upon one foot only if it stood on either of these truths alone, and would thus be liable to be blown down by every gust of temptation. But when his confidence stood in the firm conviction of a general truth on the one hand, and a blessed experience of that truth in his own case on the other, it then stood firmly upon two feet: and no storm or gust that might arise could drive him down from his standing.

And this must be the ground of our confidence too. No Arminian could consistently believe that God would for a certainty supply the wants of the Philippian Church, because, according to his creed, they might be God's children today, and the devil's children tomorrow. Nor, again, if we had not had some experience of God's mercy and faithfulness in our own souls, supplying us from time to time, could we rest upon the mere doctrinal truth, that God will supply the wants of his church? But when the truth of the doctrine and the truth of the experience meet together in the same heart, then there is a solid foundation on which spiritual confidence can rest.

If we look at the words of the text, I think we shall find three things in them. Want is the first: "my God shall supply all your need." Supply is the second: "my God shall supply." And the Channel, through which this supply comes, is the third, "according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus."

I. A man has no spiritual wants until he is made a spiritual man; this is, to God-taught souls, a self-evident truth. Therefore, until the Lord is pleased to quicken the soul into spiritual life, it has no one spiritual panting after God, no one spiritual desire, for it has no one spiritual necessity. But no sooner does life commence in the soul, than wants and necessities commence with it. As the life of the new-born babe is manifested by its desiring the mother's breast, so is the life of the new-born soul manifested by its desiring, as the Apostle says, "the sincere milk of the word, that it may grow thereby."

He, then, that has no wants is dead in sin, or dead in a profession. But, just in proportion to the depth of God's work upon the soul, will be the depth of the wants; and just in proportion to the continued carrying on of that work with power, will there be the continual springing up of these wants in the soul.

With God's blessing, we will look at a few of these spiritual wants, which God will supply; he himself having caused them to be felt in the soul.

Until the Lord gives us eyes to see, and a heart to feel our real state and case, our true character and condition before him, we can feel no want to be saved from this state—to be delivered from this condition. The very word, salvation—deliverance—implies a being saved, a being delivered out of something; and that, a state of ruin, wretchedness, and misery. Whatever, then, a man may know doctrinally of the truths of the gospel, until he is brought by the special teaching of the Spirit to need something which God alone can give him, he cannot be said to have any spiritual life or feeling in his soul.

1. But what is the first want that the living soul most pressingly

and most urgently feels? Mercy. Was not that the first cry which was raised up in the heart of the publican: "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Mercy was a word that never before had been in his lips: the craving after mercy was an experience utterly unknown in his soul. But no sooner did sin and guilt fall upon his conscience, no sooner was he spiritually convinced of his state as a sinner before God, than a need of mercy was sensibly opened up in his heart; and no sooner was the want raised up in his heart, than the groaning cry burst forth from his lips, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

Now, I believe, in my conscience, that there are hundreds, if not thousands of persons, in a profession of religion, who never once, from their hearts, lifted up that earnest cry to God; the words may have passed through their lips, but the groaning cry before a heart-searching God to visit their souls with mercy, never really burst forth from a broken heart. And if a man has not taken that first step in the divine life, there is no use his talking about how established he is in the doctrines of grace. If he has not come in by "the door," he has clambered over the wall, and is but a thief and a robber. The sweetness of mercy, its suitability to our ruined condition, can only be felt by one who has groaned under the pressure of guilt: and when guilt is really laid upon a man's conscience, nothing but manifested mercy can ever heal his wound, or suit his case. Nor will this need of, and cry for mercy, be confined just to one or two periods in a man's life: but he will often be, as Hart says "Begging mercy every hour."

Daily sinners want daily mercies; hourly iniquities cry out for hourly pardon; whatever, therefore, a man may have experienced in his soul in times past of granted mercy, yet, as he is perpetually a sinner against God, and is continually doing things, which his conscience bears its solemn testimony against as evil, there will be from time to time a cry in his soul, that God would look down upon him in mercy, and heal his perpetual backslidings from him.

2. Pardon—forgiveness—and an inward testimony that the blood of Jesus Christ has been shed for his sins, is a want, a spiritu-

al need, that God brings every one of his children to experience. It is this need which effectually teaches a man to believe in particular redemption. A man who holds universal redemption can never want to have pardon sealed upon his conscience: he cannot value the blood of Christ, until he knows that that blood was specially shed; nor can he behold the efficacy of atoning blood, until he sees that that blood was shed for particular objects. As long, therefore, as a man is buried in free-will errors, until he is effectually purged by “the spirit of judgment, and the spirit of burning” out of freewill and self-righteousness, and has had all his Arminian sentiments dashed to a thousand shivers in his conscience, he can never know what it is to groan out from the depths of his soul for manifested pardon and forgiveness. But, when he is taught of God to view the depth, the awful depth of his iniquities with one eye, and to behold the virtue and efficacy of the atoning blood of Christ with the other, and yet feels his conscience filthy, guilty, burdened, and in bondage, he, and he alone, will then effectually plead for the manifestation and application of that atoning blood to his soul.

3. Righteousness—that he may stand righteous before God, “accepted in the Beloved,” his own “filthy rags” cast to the dung-hill, and Christ’s glorious robe of righteousness imputed unto and put upon him—is “a need” felt by every quickened vessel of mercy, before the Lord assures him that he stands complete in Christ. His own “righteousness” being opened up to him as “filthy rags,” he views himself, as the Lord showed the prophet Zechariah (Zech 3:3) as Joshua, the high priest, clothed with filthy garments, before the angel of the Lord. Nothing can satisfy him, therefore, but that which satisfies God; nothing is acceptable in his eyes, but that which is acceptable in the eyes of infinite Purity—a robe “without spot or blemish, or any such thing.” And it is the sigh, the cry, and the groaning desire of his soul, to have that blessed robe brought out of the heavenly wardrobe, where it is stored up for those who believe in Jesus, and experimentally put upon him by the Spirit of the living God.

4. Wisdom—that he may understand the mind and will of God—that he may have a spiritual and feeling perception of, and acquaintance with “the truth as it is in Jesus”—is a “need,” a spiritual want, felt in every living soul. What poor, blind fools are we by nature! How insufficient is all our earthly wisdom and all our natural knowledge, to guide us into the truth! When the soul really is under divine teaching, how ignorant it feels as to every, single thing it desires to know! What clouds of darkness perpetually hang over the mind! What a veil of ignorance seems continually spread over the heart! The simplest truths of God’s word seem hid in the deepest obscurity, and the soul can neither see the truth, nor see or feel its personal interest in it.

Now, when a man is here, he does not go to the Lord with lying lips and a mocking tongue, and ask him to give him wisdom, merely because he has heard that other persons have asked it of God, or because he reads in the Bible that Christ is made of God “wisdom” to his people; but he goes as a poor blind fool, as one completely ignorant, as one totally unable to understand a single spiritual truth of himself, as one thoroughly helpless to get into the marrow of vital godliness, into the mysteries of true religion, or into the very heart of Christ. For it is not a few doctrines received into the head, nor a sound creed, that can satisfy a soul convinced of its ignorance. No; nothing can satisfy him, but to have that divine illumination, whereby he “sees light in God’s light:” that spiritual wisdom communicated, whereby he feels himself “made wise unto salvation;” that unctuous light shed abroad in the heart, which is the only key to gospel truth, and is its own blessed evidence, that he knows the truth by a divine application of it to his soul.

5. And strength, too, to walk in God’s ways, to believe God’s promises, to lay hold of the Mediator’s righteousness, to tread in the strait and narrow path that Jesus walked in before him, “leaving us an example that we should follow his steps.” Every quickened child of God is deeply convinced of his utter helplessness and weakness in divine things; and he feels, to his very heart’s core, in

the inward recesses of his soul, that he is as weak as water against all temptations, and utterly unable to do a single thing that God can approve of, unless he is pleased to work it in him with his own powerful and blessed hand.

Until a man gets experimentally acquainted with temptation, he can never know anything of the weakness of the flesh: he may seem to have stood for years in the truth, and made a most flourishing profession, and yet be completely ignorant of his own heart, and of the mountains that lie on the road to glory. But, sooner or later, temptation will come upon him: and temptation, sooner or later, will prove him what he is. If he is nothing but a heady, high-minded professor, a powerful and suitable temptation will probably sweep him at once out of the path in which he has professed to walk: and even if he is a child of God, the first effect of it may be for a time to beat him down. The wind sometimes sweeps over the branches as though it would bow the noblest and strongest oak in the dust: and yet, when the blast has passed away, the tree springs again to its place. So a living soul, when the blast of temptation comes down violently upon it, may seem at first almost laid prostrate; and yet there is a secret strength in a living man, whereby, when the temptation has passed over, he is again restored to his place. The dead tree has no vitality in it, so as to recover itself when the storm has passed over, and therefore it falls, and great is the fall of it; but where there is vitality in stem and root, there is a springing back of every branch and twig to its place, when the first gust of the storm has blown over. So it is with the living soul; "the root of the matter" is in it; the grace and teaching of God are in the heart; "underneath are the everlasting arms;" and the Lord his God upholds him with his powerful hand. So that though the first effect of temptation may seem to be almost overwhelming, so as to beat him utterly down, yet there is, by the grace and mercy of God, a returning to his standing, so as not to be utterly prostrated by the very roots.

And so with respect to sin. No man knows what sin really is,

until its nature and power are experimentally made known to him. Many go on for years in a sort of dreamy profession of religion, knowing nothing experimentally of the amazing power of sin in their carnal minds. Many a professor walks consistently for years, sin all the while lying dead and torpid in him, until some mine, which Satan perhaps has been secretly digging for weeks, months, or years, suddenly explodes, and sets all the sin of his heart a fire; and he, not being possessed of grace, and God, therefore, not upholding him by his powerful hand, is at once driven into secret or open licentiousness: and hardly knows what sin is before he is plunged headlong into it.

A child of God never knows what he really is, and what a poor weak creature he is against temptation, until the power of sin is opened up in his carnal mind. But when sin is opened up, when temptation and his fallen nature come together, when Satan is permitted to blow a blast from hell into his carnal mind, and to suit the temptation to the lust, and the lust to the temptation, then a child of God begins experimentally to know the overwhelming power of sin, and to feel as utterly unable to stand against sin and Satan as to perform an immediate miracle before your eyes. But, by this painful experience, he learns his need of divine strength and the necessity of being kept by the power of God from falling a prey to his own corruptions. This unexpected discovery of his own weakness effectually convinces him that God himself must work in him deliverance from the power of evil, and “strengthen him with might by his Spirit in the inner man,” against the swelling tide of his own corruptions, or sooner or later he must be utterly carried away by them.

I believe, in many cases, we go on for some time receiving doctrines as revealed in the Scriptures, and giving, as we think, our full adherence to them, being quite convinced they are true; but not being as yet experimentally grounded in them, after a time we begin to find that we have only half learned them. For instance, we may, perhaps, for years have assented to this doctrine, that Christ’s

strength is made perfect in our weakness. We have heard ministers preach from it, we have approved of all they said upon it; we have been well convinced it is a gospel truth; but what did we know of it all the time experimentally? Why, perhaps, nothing, positively nothing, absolutely nothing. And so we continued ignorant of our own ignorance until some powerful temptation came upon us, or some lust or corruption was opened up in our heart, when we felt all our fancied strength give way, and found we had no more power to stand against this temptation, or to overcome that evil, than we had power to raise up the dead from their graves. Thus we learn our need of divine strength; and we now no longer believe it merely upon the testimony of the written word, no longer receive it as a truth because good and gracious men preach it, but we receive it into our conscience as an experimental reality, the weight and power of which we have known for ourselves.

But the words of the text are very extensive. It does not say, "My God shall supply some of your need." but, "My God shall supply all your need." If, then, we are the people of God, we cannot come into any one state of mind, into any one exercise of soul, into any one perplexing circumstance, into any one spiritual or temporal trouble, to which this promise does not apply. If the word "all" could be struck out, what a blank it would leave! How it would foster the doubts, and fears, and suspicions, that arise in the mind! It would at once be suggested by unbelief, "God has not said 'all;' therefore your need is excluded." The tempted soul would say, "My temptation is not there;" the poor creature, perplexed in providence, would say, "My providential trial is not there;" the tender conscience, groaning under the power of sin, would say, "My exercise is not there;" and thus all might be so continually bringing forward each his own exercises to his own peculiar exclusion, that, by the omission of that little word all, Satan might rob every child, of his manifested interest in this promise. And, therefore, to block him out, to keep the Church of God in its right place, as a needy dependant upon the divine bounty, and yet to open up a sweet

source of consolation to the living family, that word "all" has been introduced by the blessed Spirit, that a child of God may never be in any circumstances, to which the promise should not apply.

But, my friends, we feel (those of us I mean whom God has taught anything of the truth) that the Lord must not only give us wants, in the first instance, but that he must from time to time keep alive a sense of those wants in our souls. There are many times with us, when we seem not to have a single spiritual want; when we are, in our feelings, as cold and carnal, careless and stupid, dead and unfeeling, as if a single groaning cry had never gone up out of our heart, as if there had never been any breathing after the presence of God, as if the power of truth had never once been felt, and as if we had no more to do with truth, and truth had no more to do with us, than if there were no God to know or fear, no Jesus to believe in or love, no Spirit to teach or lead us, no hell to dread, nor heaven to enjoy. Through this wretched carnality and recklessness we learn that an experience of our urgent wants must, by a divine power, be again and again brought into our hearts.

But what painful ways does the Lord employ to keep a feeling sense of these wants in exercise! It is not to stretch ourselves in an evening in our arm chair, and say—"I have this want, and I have that need; I will therefore go to the Lord with this want, and ask him, to supply that need!" No, that is not the way whereby the Lord usually raises up a sense of want in our souls; but he permits, in his providence, some powerful temptation to assault us that we would not have for the world; or he lays some heavy affliction upon us, that brings us down into the dust; or he brings some trouble which we would escape from if we could, and the very sight of which fills us with dread. He thus raises up wants, by putting us into situations, which the flesh naturally shrinks from, and at which, if left to ourselves, we can only murmur and rebel. When he puts us, then, into these spots, where we should never have put ourselves, which we hate when we are put into them, and where we kick sometimes "as a wild bull in a net;" and when he keeps us down in these spots

by his own powerful hand—then is the time, and that is the way, that he raises up wants in our souls. But wherever the Lord raises up, by the power of his blessed Spirit, these wants within, he, at the same time, mercifully enables us to pour them out at his footstool, and to ask him to supply them, because it is written upon our consciences that he alone can grant our desires, and mercifully appear on our behalf.

II. And this leads us to consider the second thing that we mentioned as contained in the text; which is Supply. “My God shall supply all your need.”

Oh! what should we do without a supply? Want could not satisfy us. Many seem to rest upon wants; they have, they say, a sense of their lost and ruined state, are troubled with doubts and fears, have exercises of mind, and are often assailed by temptations. So far, so good. But their error is, that they rest upon these exercises as satisfactory evidences of a work of grace. Wants are very good when they lead the soul to seek after and prize their supply. But can mere want satisfy us? Suppose we had this year a deficient harvest: suppose the Lord, in anger for our sins as a nation, were to smite down the very wheat from the soil, and not give us our daily bread, would want and famine satisfy us? Suppose the noble river Thames, which flows by this metropolis, were dried up, so that no ships freighted with merchandise could come up to the city of London, should we think, in that case, that want would serve for supply: and that a dry channel would be as good as the present liquid highway? The want indeed makes the supply precious; but who could rest upon the want? No, it is the supply; it is the Lord causing, year after year, the ground to bring forth its abundant harvests, that supplies our table with bread. It is the same munificent God sending rain, and causing the sea to ebb and flow, that bids the noble river go down into the sea, and bring up the ships. So it is spiritually. It is not having wants (though spiritual wants are evidences of the divine life, and are so far good) but it is the supply of the wants, which is the real marrow of vital godliness: and in

the receiving of this supply does all the enjoyment and comfort of spiritual religion consist.

Now the Lord has promised that he will “supply all our need;” that we shall not pine away in want, shall not die of hunger, shall not perish with thirst, shall not be utterly carried away by temptation, shall not be borne down the current of sin into hell; but that he will graciously supply those wants which he himself has kindled in the soul. And does he not, from time to time, graciously supply them? Do you not know it so, from time to time, in soul experience, that there is a supply opened up in proportion to the reality and depth of your wants? Have you not sometimes been under heavy afflictions, and deeply, sensibly wanted the hand of God to appear, either to remove the affliction or else to give you patience and resignation under it? And has not the Lord, in his own time and way, done both for you? Has he not sometimes removed the affliction? and has he not at other times given you patience and resignation to submit to it, and to look up unto him that it may work in you “the peaceable fruit of righteousness?” So with respect to temptations: did we ever go to the Lord with a temptation, which was not more or less taken away? I have known what it is to labour under a temptation so strong and powerful, that I thought it would utterly overthrow me: and I have known what it is to go with groans, and sighs, and tears to the Lord to take the temptation away: and I have had it taken away, so as not to come with the same power again. It is the removing of temptation, in answer to prayer, in this marked and sensible way, that raises up in our souls gratitude to God for his delivering hand.

But temptations, at least, many of them, are such as people naturally love, and so far from their being a pain, they are a pleasure to them, to gratify which is their chief delight. A change, therefore, must take place in us before we can desire to be delivered from them. Few will sincerely and spiritually go to the Lord, and cry from their hearts to deliver them from the power of a temptation, until it presses so weightily upon their conscience, and lies so

heavy a burden upon their soul, that none but God can remove it. But when we really feel the burden of a temptation; when, though our flesh may love it, our spirit hates it; when, though there may be in our carnal mind a cleaving to it, our conscience bleeds under it, and we are brought spiritually to loathe it and to loathe ourselves for it; when we are enabled to go to the Lord in real sincerity of soul and honesty of heart, beseeching him to deliver us from it, I believe, that the Lord will sooner or later, either remove that temptation entirely in his providence or by his grace, or so weaken its power that it shall cease to be what it was before, drawing our feet into paths of darkness and evil.

As long, however, as we are in that state of which the prophet speaks, "Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty"; Ho 10:2 as long as we are in that carnal, wavering mind, which James describes—"A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways;" as long as we are hankering after the temptation, casting longing, lingering side glances after it, rolling it as a sweet morsel under our tongue, and, though conscience may testify against it, yet not willing to have it taken away; there is no hearty cry, nor sigh, nor spiritual breathing of our soul, that God would remove it from us. But when we are brought, as in the presence of a heart-searching God, to hate the evil to which we are tempted, and cry to him that he would, for his honour and for our soul's good, take the temptation away, or dull and deaden its power; sooner or later (I can speak from soul experience on more than one occasion, and, if I thought it right to mention them, could bring forward several instances), the Lord will hear the cry of those who groan to be delivered from those temptations, which are so powerfully pressing them down to the dust.

So with respect to the Lord's strength. When is it we find divine strength? It is only when we are experimentally sensible of our own weakness, and feel utterly unable to think, to speak, or to do anything acceptable in God's sight; when weakness is not a doctrine, but an experience; when man's thorough helplessness is believed

by us, not merely because we read it in the Scripture, but because we really know it in our own hearts. Then it is, and then alone, that we find the strength of the Lord made perfect in weakness. If we go forward in our own strength, we are sure to get baffled; none of our anticipations are realized; disappointment and mortification are the only crop we reap. But when we feel all weakness and emptiness, we find at times secret and unexpected strength communicated.

So with respect to righteousness. When we go to the Lord, hating ourselves, abhorring and loathing ourselves in dust and ashes, and see no more reason why God should have mercy upon us than upon the vilest sinner who is daringly fighting against his Majesty, this is the time when he often gives to the soul a sweet testimony of its interest in Christ's righteousness. When we go puffed up with some conceit of our own righteousness, and thinking, "surely we are not so bad as others, surely there are those who are or have been more inconsistent than we," and thus, as Berridge says, "squint and peep another way, some creature-help to spy," there is a denial, on the Lord's part, to indulge us with a spiritual view of Christ's glorious righteousness. But when the soul stands naked and bare, clothed with humility, and filled with contrition, then the Lord, from time to time, opens up a sight of Christ's glorious righteousness as unto all and upon all them that believe.

And so with respect to every kind of deliverance; for instance, deliverances in providence. Until we get into providential difficulties, we know nothing of providential deliverances; until we get into straits, where our own wisdom is utterly at fault, we do not find the Lord stretching forth his hand to guide and deliver us. But when we are brought to this point, that our way is completely blocked up, that we do not know what step to take, and unless the Lord appear: we must certainly go wrong; when, under these exercises, we are brought honestly and sincerely to cry to the Lord mercifully to appear on our behalf, sooner or later, a secret light will be cast upon the path, and there will be a fulfilment of that gracious

promise, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, this is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." Isa 30:21

It was so with the children of Israel. Until they had come out of Egypt, and "the wilderness had shut them in," till they were encamped by the Red Sea, with the rolling waves before, and their furious enemies behind, there was no deliverance from the power and rage of Pharaoh. But the Lord did not tell them there should be deliverance in that way. He left the deliverance to come when the danger came; yet no sooner did the danger come than the deliverance came with it. Have we not ever found it thus? and thus we shall continue to find it. It is when the danger comes, when the perplexity arises, and we have no strength, wisdom, or power, to deliver ourselves, that then, and not till then, the deliverance comes.

We should not know what a God the Lord was, unless things were thus managed. We profess to believe in an Almighty, All-present, All-seeing God; and we should be highly offended if a person said to us, "you do not believe that God sees everything, that he is everywhere present, that he is an Almighty Jehovah;" we should almost think that he was taking us for an atheist. And yet practical atheists, we daily prove ourselves to be. For instance, we profess to believe that God sees everything, and yet we are plotting and planning as though he saw nothing; we profess to know that God can do everything, and yet we are always cutting out schemes, and carving out contrivances, as though he were like the gods of the heathen, looking on and taking no notice: we profess to believe that God is everywhere present to relieve every difficulty and bring his people out of every trial, and yet when we get into the difficulty and into the trial, we speak, think, and act, as though there were no such omnipresent God, who knows the circumstances of the case, and can stretch forth his hand to bring us out of it.

Thus the Lord is obliged (to speak with all reverence) to thrust us into trials and afflictions, because we are such blind fools, that

we cannot learn what a God we have to deal with, until we come experimentally into those spots of difficulty and trial, out of which none but such a God can deliver us. This, then, is one reason why the Lord often plunges his people so deeply into a sense of sin; it is to show them what a wonderful salvation from the guilt, filth, and power of sin, there is in the Person, blood, and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. For the same reason, too, they walk in such scenes of temptation; it is in order to shew them what a wonder working God he is in bringing them out. This too is the reason why many of them are so harassed and plagued; it is that they may not live and act as though there were no God to go to, no Almighty friend to consult, no kind Jesus to rest their weary heads upon; it is in order to teach them experimentally and inwardly those lessons of grace and truth which they never would know till the Lord, as it were, thus compels them to learn, and actually forces them to believe what they profess to believe. Such pains is he obliged to take with us; such poor scholars, such dull creatures we are. No child at a school ever gave his master a thousandth part of the trouble that we have (so to speak) given the Lord to teach us.

If your child were as stupid, as dull, as intractable, in learning his A B C, as we are learning the A B C of religion, I know not how many times a day he would be put into the corner; I know not how many cuffs our natural impetuosity might not be provoked to give him. But we are such stupid wretches, that God has actually to put us into places where he would not otherwise put us, in order that we may learn the up-stroke of the great A of true religion; in order just to teach us, as the prophet says, "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little." But when we have got a little way into our alphabet, such dull scholars are we that we almost immediately forget it all, and have to go back, and begin with great A again. So we go on learning and forgetting, learning and forgetting; and, with all the pains taken with us, when we most wish to put our lesson into practice, feeling as if we had not yet learnt a single truth aright. In order, then, to teach us what a God he is, what a merciful

and compassionate High Priest—in order to open up the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of his love, he is compelled to treat, at times, his people very roughly, and handle them very sharply; he is obliged to make very great use of his rod, because he sees that “foolishness is so bound up in the hearts” of his children that nothing but the repeated “rod of correction will ever drive it far from them.”

Now to learn religion in this way, is not like getting hold of a few doctrines in the judgment, and then setting up to be a very bright professor; like a tradesman who borrows all his capital, and then, by puffing and advertising drives for a time a flourishing trade, till the bubble bursts. God’s people cannot thus borrow from books and ministers a number of doctrines and texts, and then set up with these as a stock in trade. No; they have to be emptied and stripped of all such borrowed stock and brought into darkness and confusion, that they may learn all they really know from the lips of the Lord himself. They have to pass through many painful exercises and troubles, and all for one purpose—that they may be scholars in the school of tribulation, and thus walk in the footsteps of a suffering Jesus.

III. And this leads us to the Channel, through which God supplies all the varied wants of his people. “My God,” says Paul, “shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.”

Oh! If there was no Christ Jesus, there could be no “supply.” Howling in hell would our miserable souls be, unless there was a Mediator at the right hand of the Father—a blessed Jesus, full of love, pity, and power, co-equal and co-eternal in his Divine nature with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and yet the God-Man in whom “it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell.” If there was not such a blessed Mediator at the right hand of God, then not one drop of spiritual comfort, not one particle of hope, not one grace or fruit of the Spirit to distinguish us from the damned in hell, would ever be our lot or portion. Oh! we should never forget

the channel through which these mercies come; we should never, for one moment, think that they could come through any other person or in any other way, than through God's only begotten Son, now in our nature, at his right hand, as our Advocate, Mediator, and Intercessor with the Father.

And this supply is "according to the riches of his glory;" which, I believe, is a Hebrew idiom, signifying his glorious riches—riches so great, so unlimited, so unfathomable, raising up the soul to such a height of glory, that they may well be called "glorious." And these "in Christ Jesus:" stored up in him, locked up in him, and supplied freely out of him, just according to the wants and exercises of God's people.

Oh! my friends, when the channel through which these mercies come into the soul, is in a measure opened up to the eye of faith: when we see that we have not to deal with pure Deity, with offended purity, with a justly incensed Jehovah, with a holy God, who, with one glance of his righteous eye, could frown our souls into a never-ending hell, but have to plead with "the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ," with a merciful God, who has sent his dear Son into the world that those who believe in his name should not die, but live for ever; when we see, too, by the eye of faith what this blessed God-Man has done and suffered: when we mark him coming down from heaven to earth, when we view him in the manger, when we trace all his sorrowing and suffering path through life, and see him at the end suspended betwixt two malefactors, groaning out that agonizing cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—when we accompany his dead body to the tomb, and see him raised up thence with power and glory, to sit at the right hand of the Father: oh! I say, when faith receives this blessed truth of Christ's mediation in the love of it, in the sweetness of it, and in the power of it, how it opens up a way for the poor and needy to plead at Jehovah's footstool? How it encourages them to go to the throne of grace, with all their wants, troubles, and exercises! And how it draws forth their soul into admiring views,

hopes, and love towards the Lord Jesus, for having done and suffered such things on their behalf!

The channel, then, through which every gospel blessing and mercy comes into the soul, is through the Mediator at God's right hand: and in him God can be "just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." This is our plea. Not that we have done anything, not that we can do anything; not that we have lived good and holy lives; not that we have said, or done this or that—all such carnal pleas and vain hopes must be swept away. Our only warrant to draw near to the throne is this—the blessed teachings of the Spirit in the soul, whereby he gives the eye of faith to see Jesus, and to approach the Father through his atoning sacrifice and his meritorious obedience, as the Scripture speaks, "for through him we both have access by one Spirit, unto the Father." Eph 2:18 And as through this channel alone do our prayers flow upward, so through this channel, and through this channel only, does every mercy, and every blessing, and every grace flow downward into the hearts of those that fear God. If it were not so, long ago must we have died in despair: if it were not so, long ago must God have banished us from his presence for ever. But now that there is One in our nature, who has suffered, bled, and died, and made an atonement for sin, God can be holy and merciful at the same moment; he can forgive sin, and yet not have his justice for a moment sullied.

If, then, you are a child of God, a poor and needy soul, a tempted and exercised believer in Christ, "God shall supply all your need." It may be very great; it may seem to you, sometimes, as though there were not upon all the face of the earth such a wretch as you, as though there never could be a child of God in your state; so dark, so stupid, so blind and ignorant, so proud and worldly, so presumptuous and hypocritical, so continually back-sliding after idols, so continually doing things that you know are hateful in God's sight. And if you think that you are the worst, I could find you a companion; I could find you one who could walk side by side with you in every step; who could put his arm into yours, and com-

pare notes, and if you thought yourself one of the basest, vilest, and worst of all who are hanging upon Jesus, could, from the same lips whose breath you now hear, whisper the same things into your ear that you might whisper into his. But whatever our need be, it is not beyond the reach of divine supply; and the deeper our need, the more is Jesus glorified in supplying it. It is not little sinners that will go to heaven; little sinners can know nothing experimentally of the blood of the atonement. It is not those who can make themselves religious, that God will take any pains with: it is not those who can make a ladder and climb up the rounds of their own piety, that will reach the heavenly Canaan: but those wilt run the race and gain the prize who often feel themselves too base and too black, too filthy and too vile to be saved. It is not those who are walking upon the stilts of their own religion, and raising themselves so many feet higher, who are accepted by him who searcheth the heart: but it is those, who have no power to walk at all, and who cannot move a single step except as God is pleased to "work in them that which is well pleasing in his sight," who eventually will come off more than conquerors through him that loved them, and gave himself for them.

Say not then that your case is too bad, that your wants are too many, your perplexities too great, your temptations too powerful. No case can be too bad; no temptations can be too powerful; no sin, except the sin against the Holy Ghost, can be too black; no enigma can be too hard; no state in which the soul can get is beyond the reach of the almighty and compassionate love, that burns in the breast of the Redeemer.

But do you try him? How many there are who seem to have wants, and yet their wants are not pressing enough to force the cry for mercy out of their souls! How many in religion are like some persons, naturally, that are ailing all their lives, and yet are never bad enough to go to a doctor! They have their dyspepsia, and their bilious attacks, and their rheumatic pains, and their nervous complaints, but they go croaking and croaking on, and yet do not apply

to any physician, or medical man; they are not bad enough for that. So are there not many of God's people, who go croaking and croaking on with their doubts and fears, questionings and suspicions, convictions and complaints, and their other numerous ailments, but in whom the disease of sin is not so deeply felt as to make them sigh, cry, and groan out their souls, and breathe their very hearts into the ears of Jehovah Rophi, that that blessed Physician would apply the balm of his atoning blood to their bleeding consciences?

Until we know what it is to have a disease deeply fixed in our vitals, we shall never have recourse to the Almighty Physician; until we are brought into the depths of poverty, we shall never know nor value Christ's riches; and until our own case is utterly unmanageable by our own wisdom, we shall never find that Christ is made "wisdom" to his church. But when we come into those desperate circumstances, that all the help of men and angels combined could never bring a moment's peace into our hearts—when we come into those straits and difficulties, wherein God must appear, or we must perish at his feet, the supply then will not be long delayed: the answer to prayer then will not be long in tarrying; the wheels of deliverance will be heard approaching; and the Conqueror who rides in that chariot, the bottom of which is "paved with love," will come into the heart of his Hephzibah, and ravish her with his smile. But as long as we can do without him, he, so to speak, will do without us; as long as we trifle and play with our ailments, our doubts, and fears, the Lord will stand back: but when nobody can bless us but he, and nobody can do us good but he, he will not be long in tarrying. "His heart is full of tenderness, His bowels melt with love" for poor sinners. He is now behind the lattice, hidden only by the wall; he only waits to hear a few more knocks; and when the soul is so pressed down that it cannot do without him, he will shine from behind the lattice, blessedly appear, and make it happy in himself.

It is a truth, then, which will stand for ever, that "God will supply all our need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." If any of his people lived and died without their spiritual want being

supplied (I say it with all reverence), God would forfeit his word. But he will never suffer any one to charge him with that; he will never let any one say that he was not faithful to his promise. He will prove, before men and devils, saints and sinners, that he has never given a promise in the Scripture which he has not fulfilled, or which he will not fulfil to the very letter.

55 THE ETERNAL REFUGE

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, London,
On Lord's Day Evening,
August 13, 1843

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee: and shall say. Destroy them." Deuteronomy 33:27

We were considering this morning, a passage (Ex. 33:16), which came from the lips of Moses very shortly after the children of Israel had entered into the wilderness: and the words which I have just read issued also from the same lips forty years afterwards, shortly before Moses closed his eyes, and entered into everlasting rest. But do we perceive the strain altered? Do we find that forty years further experience had made a difference in the doctrine that Moses believed, and in the blessings that Moses enjoyed? Did a longer experience of his own backslidings, and of the idolatry of the people committed to his charge, give him a better opinion of human nature? Did it alter the deep conviction, which he doubtless had before, that man's heart was "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?" Or did God's mercies and blessing, displayed for forty years, lead him to depreciate, to under-estimate, to form a less idea of what superabounding grace was, than he felt forty years before? I venture to say, that not only had his experience been enlarged downwards, but enlarged also upwards; that

he not only had a deeper sense of man's ruin and misery, but also a higher and more abounding sense of the riches of God's grace. He was not like some preachers, such as the late Dr. Ryland and Rowland Hill, who began Calvinists and ended Arminians; or, if they did not end in Arminianism, were not much further from it than Eden-street from Tottenham-Court-Road. Not a hundred yards. No, he died as he lived, in the sweet enjoyment and blessed testimony that salvation was of grace from first to last: and, almost with expiring breath, he traced all the mercies that were showered down upon the people of God to the eternal covenant settlements, and he looked forward into eternity, as though that would be the only termination, if termination it can be called, of the original source of God's mercy and love. "The eternal God," says he, with expiring breath. "is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee: and shall say. Destroy them." Not a word here of creature merit, not a syllable of human righteousness. not a single iota of what they were to do in the matter, but the eternal God was to be "all in all."

We will, then, with God's blessing, look at this passage, which this man of God breathed forth, for the comfort and encouragement of the church of God in all times, ages, and dates, and we will consider the words in the order that they lie before us.

I. "The eternal God is thy refuge." We will look at the last word first, "Refuge!" What does "refuge" imply? It implies escape. We hear of "harbours of refuge," that is havens and ports along an iron-bound coast, which were either originally constructed by the hand of God, or else, in later days, by the hand of man, for the purpose of affording ships an escape from the coming storm. Again, we have the idea still more plainly conveyed to us in a Scriptural figure. You are, of course, familiar with the expression, which occurs in Numbers (Num. 35:11), and also in Joshua (Josh. 20:2), "the cities of refuge." There were certain cities belonging to the Levites, which were set apart, six on one side of Jordan, and six on the other, where the man-slayer was to flee, who had slain a person unawares, that he

might be safe there from the sword of the avenger of blood and next of kin to the person whom he had unwittingly slain. Now, both these figures give to us this idea a place of escape, a spot of safety, a harbour where we may take shelter and find security from some coming danger, or some threatening enemy.

Having seen, then, a little of the idea contained in the word "refuge," we will look at the various refuges which men devise for themselves. It seems that there is in man's conscience, by nature, some intimations, very dark and feeble, but still some intimations of a God, of a judgment to come, of a heaven to be obtained, and a hell to be feared. These convictions work with more or less power in men's minds: some men, it appears, know but little of natural convictions. I think Mr. Huntington, in one of his writings, mentions a man, who told him that he never had had one conviction of sin in all his life, which he said he could scarcely believe. No doubt cases, however, do occur in which men pass through life, and drop into an awful eternity, who have never had one conviction of sin until they are plunged into the billows of everlasting despair. But many, if not most men, have, before the conscience becomes seared as with a hot iron, not spiritual convictions, mark you! issuing in gospel deliverance and gospel blessings, but such workings of natural conscience, as the apostle speaks of in Rom. 2:15, "Their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."

Now, when these natural convictions work in a man's mind, they set him to seek some escape from them. He is like a mariner, who, when he sees the storm brewing in the horizon, flees to harbour, that he may escape from it. These natural convictions, then, working in men's minds, put them upon thinking how they may escape from them. And they resort to various means. Some, in order to escape the pungent convictions at work in their minds, plunge headlong into sin. They are determined to get rid of them, and, with daring rebellion, rush into sin as the Gadarene swine into the sea. And I think we have this intimated in the passage, "Thou

saidst, There is no hope; no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go" (Jer. 2:25). Conviction produces a sense of despair, and that being unbearable by the natural mind, the man plunges into sin, in order to drown and get rid of it. That is one refuge, and a most desperate refuge it is. Others plunge headlong into infidelity, to escape conviction of sin; they get hold of sceptical publications, attend infidel spouters, and soon drink down the damnable doctrines of infidelity. And there is in the human heart by nature, such a spirit of infidelity, that very soon it gains a complete hold of the mind, and forms there a miserable and impregnable refuge, until they learn in hell, with the devils, to "believe and tremble." But the majority fly to works. Legality, self-will, self-righteousness, and human merit, are a part of that "folly" which is "bound up in the heart of a child." Our nature can never understand and can never relish anything but human merit and freewill.

Now, this being the case, when the conscience is alarmed with convictions of sin. good works are at once fled to. It is the most natural, the most easy, and the most simple refuge. Others. again, who have sprung from professing parents, or have sat for some time under an enlightened ministry, are convinced, in their judgment, that works cannot save them. That doctrine has been drilled into them from infancy: and therefore, by the natural information of their understandings, they do not flee to works, for they know that it is of no use to do so: but they flee to a profession, to a sound creed, to ensconce themselves in some religious nook, and hide themselves in some doctrinal refuge, that they may persuade themselves—and you know that maws deceitful heart loves to be persuaded to believe a lie—that they may persuade themselves that, because they have embraced the truth in the judgment, they have all the blessings and all the mercies connected with an experimental reception of the truth. And I believe that this is the grand refuge of hypocrites, self-deceivers, and dead professors in our day.

What is the religion of the present day? It is an imitation; and you know that every imitation must bear some resemblance to the

original. The forged bank note, the counterfeit sovereign, bears some resemblance to the good note, to the legitimate coin. This aping mimicry, then, of the present day, imitates true religion in two points, which are the two leading features of a gracious experience—a work of the law upon the conscience to convince of sin, and a gospel deliverance to persuade the soul of its interest in mercy. Notional convictions mimic the work of the law, and a reception of Calvinism and of the doctrines of grace into the judgment, apes a gospel deliverance: so that, equipped by the devil and by the deceit of their own heart, with an imitation of the work of the law and a mimicry of the work of the gospel, they go forth accomplished counterfeits; and make this their refuge, when God knows it is nothing but a refuge of lies.

The Lord will never let his people hide themselves in a lying refuge, whether this or any other. They all gladly would do so if they dared. If any of you have been brought out of a refuge of lies, there are no thanks due to you. I am sure that you hid your head in it as long as you could: I am sure that when God pulled you out of it, it was the last thing you wished to be done for you, and the last thing you desired to be done in you. You resisted. I fully believe. To be stripped of your religion was like having the skin stripped off your bones: as Job says. “I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.” But God has said in Isa. 28:17-18, of those who have “made a covenant with death, and with hell an agreement:” and these. I believe, are his own people that their “covenant with death shall be disannulled, and their agreement with hell shall not stand, for the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.” But God’s people never get into the true refuge till they have been beaten out of all false ones. They are like a ship at sea, which, when the storm comes on, will often try every shift before it runs into harbour. It will reef its sails, or take in every thread of canvas, or beat up to windward, and bear in its own strength all the pitiless pelting of wind and waves rather than run into port. And so God’s people will often bear in their

own strength the storm of the law before they flee for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel. But, after they have tried every means, and find all ineffectual to keep their ship from sinking, how glad they are, at last, by God's mercy and grace, to take on board the unerring Pilot, who steers them into the harbour of eternal safety.

We see that Moses, speaking here by the Holy Ghost, lays a very great stress on the word "thy." Luther, I believe, says somewhere that all the marrow of vital godliness, and all the honey and honeycomb of Scriptural truth, lie in the little words, "Me" and "Thee," "My" and "Thy", and so on. Thus Moses lays a great stress on the word "Thy:—The eternal God is Thy refuge." It is as though he had said, The heathen nations all around you have their refuges: but thy refuge is a refuge different from theirs, one peculiar to thyself; one which no one else knows anything about, into which no one can enter, and in which none will be found but thyself. Quarrel with it as men may, it is in the peculiarity of the mercies, which God's people receive that their blessedness mainly consists.

But he tells us who this refuge is: "The eternal God is thy refuge." To my mind, there is much sweetness in the contrast betwixt the eternal God being the refuge of his people, and the lying refuges that most hide their heads in. God's people want an eternal refuge. They have a never-dying soul: and unless they have a never-dying refuge, it is not sufficient for a never-dying soul. Works! these are for time: the never-dying soul wants something to stand when works and workers cease. Doctrines, opinions, sentiments, ordinances, the good opinion of men, the applause and flattery of the creature—these are of the earth, earthy: they fail when a man gives up the ghost. But a child of God wants a refuge, not merely that his soul may anchor in it in time, but that when time is ended, when the angel proclaims "That there should be time no longer," and his liberated soul escapes its prison-house, and is wafted into the presence of the eternal God, it may find in him at that solemn moment a refuge. Nay, all through eternity, in the rolling circuit of

its never-ending ages, the soul will still want a refuge. For could it even in eternity exist for a moment out of Christ—in a word, were the refuge of the elect anything but eternal, the moment the limited time of their shelter closed, the frowns of God would hurl them into perdition; so that nothing but an eternal God can ever be a refuge for a never-dying soul. It does not say, “His grace is thy refuge.” No; because grace will end in glory. Nor does it say, “His mercy is thy refuge,” for his mercy will end in blessing and praise. Nor does it say, “His attributes or his perfections are a refuge.” It drops the gifts and leads the soul up to the Giver, as though God’s own gifts and mercies were not sufficient, but that the immortal soul must have the immortal God, and the never-dying spirit is only safe in the bosom of an eternal Jehovah.

By the word “immortal,” we are also reminded, not only of eternity to come, but of what divines call “eternity past;” for we cannot limit the word “eternal” merely to what God is to be to his people, but must include what God ever has been to them. The “eternal God,” then, ever was, as well as ever will be, the refuge of his people. The refuge began if we may use the word begin before all time; for it began in the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. The eternal Father, the eternal Son, and the eternal Spirit, three eternal Persons in one eternal Godhead, were, are, and ever will be the eternal refuge to the Church of God; and all the attributes of the three Persons of the Trinity will be glorified in the people of God enjoying this eternal refuge. The eternal electing love of the Father, the eternal, justifying, redeeming, and atoning work of the Son, and the quickening, comforting, upholding, and teaching of the Holy Spirit, are all wrapped up in that one expression—the eternal God.

But must there not be some experience of these truths in the soul? However well we may be persuaded of the truth of these things in our head, will that satisfy you and me? It will not satisfy me, I am sure. Nothing short of the vital experience, the divine application, and the spiritual manifestation of these blessed truths,

under the solemn unction and powerful preaching of the Holy Ghost in the conscience, will ever satisfy a fainting spirit. But, if a man has never known what it is to be hunted out of house and home, if he has never had his refuges of lies broken up, if he has never had the bed too short and the covering too narrow, stripped away from under him; if he has never stood naked and needy, helpless and hopeless, before the eye of offended Justice, what can he know experimentally of a refuge, of hiding himself in God, of fleeing to him, as David says, "I flee unto Thee to hide me;" and burying, so to speak, himself in the mercy and love of God poured down into his heart, and richly streaming into, and divinely covering and encompassing his soul?

II. "And underneath are the everlasting arms." What, eternity again? Could not Moses be satisfied with telling us only once about eternity? It is sometimes thrown in the teeth of experimental ministers that they are always harping upon the same truths. "O," say some, "They have only about half a dozen tunes, which they play over again and again, for that is the sum total of their music." Does not Moses twice harp on one string? Does he not, in playing his "harp of solemn sound," again strike the same note? He does not think it irksome, having spoken of the eternal God, to repeat the expression; but he goes on to say, "Underneath are the everlasting arms." But what is the meaning of this expression? Generally speaking, we best gather the meaning of promises by looking at their contrast. Promises are always suited to certain circumstances; by looking therefore at the circumstances we can sometimes gather the spiritual meaning of the promises. For instance, if the Lord promise bread, "bread shall be given him" (Isa. 33:16): by looking at hunger we gather a clearer view of what is meant by that promise. If the Lord promise a justifying robe, "I will clothe thee with change of raiment" (Zech. 3:4), by considering what nakedness implies (Hos. 2:3), we see the propriety and suitableness of that promise. When the Lord says he is a refuge, by seeing the danger and destruction to which that promise is applicable, we gather

a sweeter view and a clearer knowledge of what is conveyed by the expression. Thus, when it says, "Underneath are the everlasting arms," in order to enter into the beauty, the sweetness, and the suitability of the expression, we must look at the state of the soul as needing everlasting arms to be placed underneath it. The idea implied is that of falling. The arms are not put above to keep the soul from rising, but underneath to keep it from falling.

Unless, then, a man knows experimentally what it is to be a poor fallen creature, and such a fallen creature that he cannot move one step of the way alone, such a helpless wretch, that, like a poor paralytic child, he must be carried in arms through the whole of his journey; if he does not know something of that experience in his soul, he has yet to learn the meaning of the everlasting arms being underneath. When the Lord shews his people what they really are, he puts an end to all the boasting of the creature. When he brings his holy law with power into their conscience, and opens up the deep corruptions of their fallen nature, he convinces them that, if they are to be saved, they must be saved by grace alone; and he makes them feel that they are so completely fallen, so entirely helpless, and so thoroughly hopeless, that nothing but a miracle, a daily miracle of mercy and grace, can ever carry their souls through the waste, howling wilderness, till he sets them before his face in glory. But the expression of the "everlasting arms being underneath," conveys not merely an intimation of what man is by nature, and of the sinner's feelings, when he first has his eyes opened to see, and his heart spiritually quickened to feel, the power of eternal things; but it also casts a ray of light on his experience all his journey through: the everlasting arms being underneath his soul, from first to last, to keep him from falling out of them into a never-ending hell. After all the goodness that God may have shewn to the soul; after all the mercy and truth that he may have brought into the conscience, let him but leave the man a moment, and he would infallibly fall into hell.

Yea, if God had led you up to this point of time, and now were

to leave you to law and justice, sin, self, and Satan. that clock opposite would scarce beat another stroke before your enemies had utterly overwhelmed you. Rutherford says somewhere in one of his Letters—"that if he had one foot in heaven, and God were to bid him shift for himself, he should tumble headlong into hell." He would want the power of God to put his other foot into heaven, so to speak, or he would drop down into the abyss of ever burning flame. So that what the soul wants is "the everlasting arms;" not as the mother says sometimes to her child. "I am quite tired of carrying you; I will take you a little further, and then you must walk home the rest of the way." No; that would not do for God's people. Like the poor paralytic child to which I have just alluded, we must be taken home every step of the way, and when we get home the Lord himself must take us into his own bosom. It would not do to be put down at the very threshold, nor in any place short of being brought into his own bosom, there to enjoy the smiles of eternal love.

The "everlasting arms," then, of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the divine Jehovah, are "underneath" every one of his people, and, being underneath them, they can neither fall through them nor out of them; but they are borne, and supported, and carried along by them until they are brought to the eternal enjoyment of a three-one God. Now, if these "everlasting arms" were not underneath a man, so "deceitful" is his heart, so "desperately wicked" is his corrupt nature, such awful stratagems does Satan lay for his feet, and such numerous perils encompass every step, that he must infallibly perish. But, my friends, what we want to feel is, that these arms are underneath us. What good will the doctrine do us? The doctrine of the "everlasting arms" being underneath us will not satisfy our souls, if we feel that we are sinking fathoms. If we keep sinking, sinking, sinking, and are afraid, at times, that we shall sink at last into hell, the bare doctrine that the "everlasting arms" are underneath God's people will not satisfy us; but we want to feel them under us, so that we can rest upon them, and enjoy a

blessed support in them and coming out of them. How secure the babe lies in its mother's arms as long as it can feel the arms touching and supporting its body; but let the mother withdraw the arm, the babe is in fear; it cries out in alarm: but so long as it feels the pressure of the mother's arms it sleeps on calm and secure. So with living souls: if they cannot find the "everlasting arms" underneath him, they cannot rest in the mere doctrine of God's upholding the church: but when they can feel a support given: when in trouble, in affliction, in sorrow, in temptation, there is a sensible leaning upon the everlasting arms, and a sensible support communicated by them, then they can rest calmly and contentedly upon them.

But, again, these "everlasting arms" must needs be very strong, for they are the arms of the Almighty, of him who has all strength concentrated in himself. Well; but are strong arms put underneath a man for no purpose? Do we not always proportion the machine to the work, and the work to the machine? Who ever constructed a steam-engine of 200 horsepower to break sticks and pick up straws? There is always a proportion betwixt the power and the work. Then, if the "everlasting arms" of the Almighty are underneath his church, they must bear a very great weight. Surely there must be some analogy betwixt the strength of God and the weakness of the soul, betwixt the iron character of the arms and the burden and weight, which they have to sustain. Just in proportion, then, as a man's soul is weighted down with burdens, exercised with temptations, tried by the devil, and harassed by the base corruptions working within; just in proportion as he is helplessly sinking down, does he find the value, and test the reality and divine efficacy of these "everlasting arms."

To talk, therefore, of knowing anything about the everlasting arms being underneath the soul, and not to feel that we are so burdened and weighted down, so exercised and harassed, so buffeted and tempted, and have such a pressure of heavy trials upon us, that we want all the power of God to support us, is nothing but folly and delusion. But, when a man is absolutely so weighted

down that, could all the united arms of the creature, could all the human beings upon the face of the globe unite all their strength, and concentrate in one pair of arms all the power that is diffused through the whole human race, and then feel that these would not be sufficient to bear up his sinking soul; why, then, when a man is brought to see that all this power would be no more to him than if they were so many straws and sticks, he then begins to see and realize the sweetness of having the everlasting arms of an Almighty God stretched beneath him. Do you then want to prove that these arms are everlasting, and do you want to know that these everlasting arms are underneath your soul? It is not by reading what Elisha Coles says about the final perseverance of the saints, nor by looking into Dr. Hawker's morning and evening portions though doubtless you might find very sweet and very appropriate remarks and proofs in each: but it is by trying them for yourself: it is by being really so exercised and burdened in your soul, that nothing short of the everlasting arms can support you. This is the way to find its reality, to prove its truth, and to come into the sweet and blessed experience of it. But when you find your soul so burdened that nothing earthly or human can support it, and then drop into the arms of infinity, cast yourself as a poor sinking wretch into the arms of a covenant Jehovah, and then feel sensible strength and evident support communicated, so that you can rest upon them for life, for death, for time, for eternity, this is to know of a truth that the everlasting arms are indeed underneath your soul.

III. "And he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee." What a free grace preacher Moses was! Moses sustained two characters. He was the mediator of the law (Gal. 3:19), and as such he preached the law powerfully; and, as "the man of God," he preached the gospel, too, blessedly; for "his doctrine dropped as the rain, and his speech distilled as the dew," when he testified of "the Rock, that his work is perfect" (Deut. 32:2-4). There is sweet gospel wrapped up in what Moses spoke here. There is no appeal to the creature. When he delivered his parting discourse, and preached his fare-

well sermon, he did not lay a load of exhortation upon the people: they were not bidden to cultivate piety, to make themselves holy, to overcome their sins in their own strength, that it was their duty to repent and believe, and to do a number of good works. No; Moses, like a faithful preacher, kept the law and gospel separate; and in preaching the gospel to the people in this, his dying sermon, did not load their shoulders with heavy burdens; but he points the eye of their soul up to God; he leads them away from the wretched, fallen creature, and directs their minds to their blessed Creator, who could work in them that which is well pleasing in his sight. "He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee." But must not they do something? Must not they fast and pray? Must not they mortify and macerate their bodies? Must not they put their hand to the work? Must not they be up and doing, and would not that be amply sufficient to overcome all their enemies? No, we find nothing about that. The Holy Ghost by Moses says nothing of what man is to do here: he says. "He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee."

Now who is "the enemy"? No doubt, literally and historically, the enemies were the seven accursed nations whom "the Lord would put out before them little by little" (Deut. 7:22); but it would be a poor interpretation to limit it to this. We have worse enemies than literal Canaanites; we have the spiritual Canaanites within. We have the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite, and all the seven accursed nations in us, for we have by nature "seven abominations in our heart" (Prov. 26:25), and none but God can thrust out these enemies from before us. But we must learn that they are enemies first. The children of Israel did not always feel that they were enemies. They often made a league with them, bowed down to their idols, and in various ways learnt their wicked works. There was a time when we acted in a similar manner; we made a covenant with our lusts, and entered into bonds of enmity with our treacherous foes, loving the world, and the things of time and sense, having our hearts set upon idols, and hugging in

our bosom base abominations.

But when God enlightens the dark understanding, quickens the soul into life, and brings a sense of his grace and presence into the heart, we learn that his enemies are our enemies, and that our enemies are his enemies; and we learn what an enemy our flesh is to God and godliness. And when we have learnt that, we want the enemy “thrust out.” We do not want, at least in our right minds, to hug our enemies as bosom friends, but we want them “thrust out,” put out of our heart, their power and dominion overcome, and our feet placed upon their necks. But we cannot do it; they are so strong; they have such chariots of iron, and they are so crafty too; they will stay in the promised land as long as they can, so that there is no getting them out by our own wisdom and strength. Sometimes they will entice us to let them stay, and sometimes declare they will not go: but stay in they will as long as they can: and thus we find that we cannot thrust them out.

Do you not sometimes find the world an enemy—covetousness an enemy—your wretched idolatries and spiritual adulteries enemies? Do you not find the base lusts that work in you, craving for gratification, the enemies of your righteous soul? And do you not find what powerful, what subtle, what flattering and deceitful enemies they are, that they will often come with an “Art thou in health, my brother?” when they carry a sword to smite you under the fifth rib? It is not, my friends, our outward enemies that can hurt us: it is our inward foes that are our worst enemies. Your outward enemies can little touch you. They may oppress and persecute you; they may wound your mind; they may hurt your character, but they cannot separate you, in soul-experience, from God: they cannot quench the spirit of prayer in your bosom; they cannot stop the sweet consolations of the Holy Ghost in your heart; they cannot bar out the presence of God from visiting your soul; but, on the contrary, as I have felt myself, when outward persecution is most active, inward peace often most abounds.

But our inward enemies! O, these are enemies indeed, because

they shut our the presence of our best, our only Friend. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. "If a man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Then when we are serving mammon we are not serving God, and when we are loving the world, the love of God is indeed damped for the time as if lost out of the soul. Of all foes these bosom enemies are the worst, for they are like traitors within the garrison. If the wife of your bosom should ever become your enemy: if ever, which God forbid, if ever she should prove unfaithful to you, and betray all your bosom secrets to her paramour, could you find such an enemy as that? So your darling lusts, that you have hugged in secret to your bosom, are the worst of enemies, for they keep out the presence of God, and by their base workings shut out, so to speak, the approach of the Comforter. We want them, then, put out of house and home; we want them "thrust out:" not indeed, that they can be eradicated out of our heart, or we be made perfect in the flesh, but that they may be thrust from their dominion, from their high throne and exalted seat in the affections.

And none but the Lord can "thrust out" these enemies from before us: none but he can really subdue and overcome these wretched foes in our bosom. But he will do it: for "He will thrust out the enemy from before thee." Whatever lust, whatever temptation, whatever secret snare, whatever bosom idol, you feel to be your enemy, God "will thrust it out from before you:" not, indeed, whilst you are hugging it as a friend—the promise runs not so, but when with grief you feel it to be your enemy, when you can appeal to God that his enemies are your enemies, and that you want these enemies of your soul to be slain, this pride overcome, this presumption rooted out, this hypocrisy trodden under foot, these darling sins crucified by the hand of God as his enemies and yours: when you come in soul-experience to that spot, then he will "thrust out the enemy from before thee;" and, in fact, he is at that moment thrusting out the enemy when you feel it to be the enemy of your soul's peace. The moment that a poor child of God feels his

sins to be his enemies, that moment God is working in his heart to thrust out these enemies from before his face.

IV. But he will do more than that: "He will say, Destroy them." The words do not run thus, "He will destroy them," but he will say to you, "Destroy them," that is, will bid you destroy them. "O," say you, "that is an impossible task, I cannot do that." Nor can you, but God can enable you; and we may depend upon it that our lusts and passions will never be overcome, never be subdued, till we can enter into the experience of the words, till we can destroy them, that is, commit them into the hands of God to be destroyed.

Have we never found this to be true? Here is that monster pride, that subtle foe. It is always whispering its accursed breath in our hearts. Have you never felt yourself to be such a wretch, because this vile monster crept and crawled in your bosom, that you could deliberately stamp him under foot? Now, when you were there you were, in the experience of the text, destroying him. Did you never feel what an accursed thing is hypocrisy, and did you never come before God's throne, and want to have this hypocrisy trampled under foot, eradicated, exterminated? When you came to that spot in soul-experience, you said, "Destroy him." And did you never want your covetousness, your unbelief, your idolatries, your spiritual adulteries, your going out after the things of time and sense, everything that your corrupt heart most craved and loved, did you never find a solemn sentence of condemnation passed upon it in your soul, so that you could, so to speak, put your hand into your bosom and pull out lust after lust, and base desire after base desire, dash them upon the ground, and stamp them under your foot?

Now, if your soul was ever brought there and if the Lord ever blessed you with a sense of mercy and grace, it has been brought there, if ever your soul was brought there, you have been in the experience of the text—"And shall say, Destroy them." And you were enabled, so far as God worked in you, to destroy them. You no longer encouraged them; you no longer held communion with them; you no longer embraced them with affection: but you said,

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“Get out of my sight, ye vipers. O, that God would utterly exterminate you: O, that he would never suffer you to rise up again in my carnal mind: O, that I could always be humble, and broken down, and melted at the feet of the Redeemer. O that cursed pride, and awful hypocrisy, and dreadul presumption, and miserable worldliness, and all the hateful and all the horrible lusts of my carnal mind, were completely swept out of my heart!” Now, if your soul was ever there, you know what the text means—”And shall say, Destroy them.”

My friends, we must take the text as it stands; it is a part of God’s word. There are many people who are very glad to hear about the eternal God being their refuge, and what a blessed thing it is to have the everlasting arms underneath the church—they would almost pull a man out of the pulpit who did not preach that: but when we come to thrusting out bosom enemies, and enforce the destruction of inward lusts—”O,” say they, “that is legal, that savours of Arminianism. What we want is this—and this is our gospel—the doctrines of grace preached up to the very heights: as high as you like; then plenty of assurance, and as much carnal comfort as ever we can have: with a half a dozen bosom lusts sitting day by day round our table, eating and drinking to their heart’s content—no cross, no self-denial, no crucifixion, no melancholy. Let us have the doctrines, let us have the assurance. and then let us and our lusts be the best friends possible: let us live and die in their embrace: and firmly believe we shall see God in glory.” That is dead doctrinal Calvinism: but that is not the teaching of the Holy Ghost in the conscience: that is not the work and witness of the blessed Spirit in the soul.

He that teaches one truth teaches another: and the same blessed Spirit that brings into the soul a sweet sense of the eternal God being our refuge, and the everlasting arms being stretched underneath to save us from a never-ending hell, will convince us and make us feel that God’s enemies are our enemies. He will, from time to time, though again and again we shall feel the poisonous

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tooth of the serpent within; but he will, from time to time, thrust
out the enemy from before us, and again and again he will enable
us, with holy jealousy and blessed indignation, to say, "Destroy
them." O may they be crucified within us, and may our soul be
conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, that he may reign and rule
in our heart, that we may serve him with every faculty of the mind,
that we may yield up to him body, soul, and spirit, live and die
in his blessed embrace, follow him in the strait and narrow path,
wear his cross that we may one day wear his crown: and suffer with
him that we may be also glorified together. This, I believe, is sound
doctrine, and this, I believe, is sound experience, and, with all my
heart, and with all my soul, I pronounce to it, a solemn Amen.

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Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, on Lord's
Day Morning

August 20, 1843.

*"He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the
beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and
to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of
the earth are the Lord's and he hath set the world upon
them." 1 Samuel 2:8*

Most of you are probably familiar, not only with the name of
the person who uttered these words, but also with the circum-
stances under which they were spoken by her. But lest any should
not immediately recollect the passage, I will just observe that they
are the words of Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel, and
that the circumstances under which they were spoken, were when
she brought her infant son, and presented him before the Lord,
that he might be his for ever. Her heart, it appears, was then so en-
larged, and her soul so comforted and strengthened by beholding

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her infant son as the manifested answer to her prayers, that she burst forth into that song of thanksgiving of which the text forms a portion.

But before I enter into the experimental meaning of the text, it may be desirable, with God's blessing, to trace out a few leading particulars of Hannah's case.

I believe, that, in Scripture, there are typical characters, as well as what are more properly called "types," or typical things; and Hannah appears to me to have been one of these typical characters. By typical characters, in this sense, I mean, not in the same way as Aaron, or Solomon, were types of Christ, but certain persons whose history and experience are typical or representative of God's dealings with his people, or of characters that should arise in the church. The history of Hannah affords us more than one instance of these typical characters. We read, for instance, 1Sa 1:1,2 that "Elkanah had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah; and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children." Elkanah seems to me to typify the Lord Jesus—I think we may fairly assume this without doing violence to the figure; and his two wives seem to represent the church, Peninnah the professing, and Hannah the possessing church. Let us see if the figure will bear us out in this interpretation. Peninnah, in type, represents the professing church. As having a form of godliness, and a name to live, she had a vast superiority outwardly over her rival, for she was fruitful, whilst Hannah was barren. This points out the superiority, in outward fruit, which many professors have over God's spiritually-taught children. But we may observe that in Peninnah's fruitfulness there was nothing manifested of a supernatural character. She had children in the common course of nature, as other married women have them; there was nothing peculiarly providential, nothing eminently striking, nothing miraculous; but all took place in the usual course.

Now this strikingly represents the way in which mere professors of religion bring forth their good works. The fruits they pro-

duce are not wrought in them by miracle; they do not spring out of a supernatural operation upon their consciences; but they are brought forth, from time to time, in the mere course of nature, without any galling disappointment on account of previous barrenness, without any earnest cry that the Lord would work powerfully in their soul, without any manifested answer to the prayer that he would make them fruitful in every good word and work. But these good works and religious performances, on which they pride themselves so highly, are brought forth by them in the usual course of nature, by the mere exertion of the creature, utterly independent of any work of the Holy Ghost upon their heart.

But this fruitfulness of Peninnah much galled and pained her barren rival, as the zeal, devotedness, piety and amiability, evident in many professors, often exceedingly gall the children of God. For they are spiritually what Hannah was naturally barren. Thus they cannot bring forth good works in the usual process of nature. Barrenness, impotency, and helplessness, have so completely paralysed them, that they require a supernatural, and I might say, without going too far, a miraculous operation of the Holy Ghost upon their conscience, just as Hannah required, to speak with all delicacy, a miraculous operation upon her womb to bring forth fruit. They are then exceedingly pained and galled by seeing how fruitful mere professors of religion are, whilst they continue barren and fruitless. Thus fruitful Peninnahs can pray, whilst barren Hannahs cannot put up a single breath of spiritual prayer: the one can always believe, whilst the other cannot raise up a single grain of living faith in their heart; the former can hope, whilst the latter at times are ready to sink down well nigh into despair: the dead can be happy while the living are often overwhelmed in misery; the carnal can read the Bible, chapter after chapter, while the spiritual can scarcely open it at times on account of the temptations which assail them; and the graceless can walk in the path of religion with all the ease and comfort in the world, whilst the gracious, like Asaph, are plagued all the day long, and chastened every morn-

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ing. As Peninnah, too, taunted her rival with her own fruitfulness and her barrenness, so the mere professors of religion often taunt God's people with their want of good works compared with their own superior and abundant religious performances. They sneer at those who profess spiritual religion as backward where they are forward; that they do not distribute tracts, support missionary societies, unite with other religious bodies, and make zealous efforts to convert the world. They therefore upbraid them, as Peninnah did Hannah, for their barrenness, and charge them with religious indifference, or, what they call, their Antinomian slothfulness; and with an inward satisfaction and wonderful self-complacency, compare their own abundant fruitfulness with their barrenness.

But what was the effect of these taunts, or, rather, what was the effect of the secret pangs produced in Hannah's soul by the sense of her barrenness? It was that she turned away from everything and went with her burden to the Lord. And there is one thing which I would not wish to omit, which is, that even her husband himself could not comfort her. Elkanah, indeed, said to her, "Am not I better to thee than ten sons?" Applying the type, Is not the Lord Jesus better to the souls of his people than all the good works in the world, or even than all the testimonies he might give them? Is not the Giver better than the gift? the Husband better than the wedding ring? Aye, indeed, he is; but then for want of the gift they often doubt their interest in the Giver, and the ring being missing, their title to the Bridegroom is called in question. Living souls cannot be satisfied with the bare knowledge that Christ is a Husband to his church, when they come short of a feeling testimony and a blessed witness, in their own consciences, that he is so to them. We cannot, indeed, fully carry the figure out, for Christ can comfort his people with a word, whilst Elkanah, with all his attempts and even double portion of gifts and love could not comfort his wife, because she was lacking in that one point on which she had so set her heart. But what was her resort and refuge? She went where every child of God will go—to the Lord, and she went to him in

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soul-trouble, as every child of God will sooner or later do.

It is not feeble prayers, customary prayers, what I may call regular prayers, that draw forth the Lord's manifested compassion, and bring down an answer of mercy and peace; but it is when the Spirit intercedes in the soul with groanings which cannot be uttered; when it walks in the steps of its great Covenant Head, of whom we read, that "being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly." {Lu 22:44} When the soul cries unto the Lord in the depth of soul trouble; it is then that the most High God bows down his ear and answers. Was it not so with Hannah? No sooner had she "poured out her soul before the Lord," and "spoken to him out of the abundance of her complaint and grief," than, though Eli at first mistook her case, the Lord spake a word by his lips to her soul, which wiped away the tears from her eyes, and sent her home in peace. And when her prayer was manifestly granted, and she came up with the answer in her arms, her infant son, "Samuel," which means "heard of God," when she held him up before the Lord as the answer to her prayer; her soul was melted into thanksgiving, the voice of praise burst forth from her lips, and the Holy Ghost has recorded her song of triumph for our comfort and instruction.

Of this song of thanksgiving, the text forms a part. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory; for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's and he hath set the world upon them."

As the passage is rather long, it may be desirable, for the sake of clearness, to break it up into smaller portions; and, though it may not be strictly according to academic rule, or I might say, according to parsonic method, yet, instead of beginning at the beginning, I shall take the liberty of commencing at the end, and looking at the last words of the text first.

1. "The pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them." By these "pillars" I understand the saints of God; for we read immediately after, "He will keep the feet of his saints,"

THE BEGGAR LIFTED UP FROM THE DUNGHILL that word being introduced, I believe, as a key to the foregoing expression, as a clue to the mystery wrapped up in the words—"The pillars of the earth."

1. Two things are said of these saints, first, that they are "pillars of the earth," upon which God hath "set the world"; and, secondly, that they are the Lord's—"The pillars of the earth are the Lord's." The world is here represented as standing on pillars, they being its support, just as the pillars of the opposite gallery support it and those who now fill it from falling headlong. Thus the saints are represented as bearing up the earth, as supporting it from falling into ruin, and from being dashed into a thousand shivers by the rod of a justly offended God.

What a wonderful glance does this give us into the mysterious kingdom of grace—that the saints of God should be the temple, and that the world should be but the scaffolding, and that when the temple is completed in all its fair proportions, the scaffolding will be taken down, put into the fire and burnt. Contrast this Scriptural declaration with the opinion of carnal, unhumbled man. Ask men generally what are the pillars of England. Would not their reply be, "It is our gallant army, our invincible navy, our Houses of Parliament, our noble aristocracy, the middle classes of the land, our ships, trade, and commerce, in a word, the wealth, capital, and property of the country?" Would not that or a similar one be the answer of nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand? But what does God say? That "the pillars of the earth," which keep England, and, with England, the whole inhabited globe from falling into a deserved hell, are not carnal props like these, but God's "saints," the poor despised people of Christ.

O, how revolting is this to nature! O, how humbling is it to the pride of man that some poor old man, or decrepit old woman, just kept from starving, should be one of the pillars which keep this country from falling into ruin! that not the queen, not the ministry, not the Houses of Parliament, not army and navy, hold up this country which we inhabit; but a poor despised set, whom the

world would gladly sweep out of its path as the filth and offscouring of all things; that these disturbers, who are scarcely thought fit to live in the same world, to breathe the same air, to walk in the same streets, and to enjoy the same religious and civil privileges, that these despised Antinomians, as they are called, whom everybody well nigh wishes dead, and whom the world, religious and irreligious, would fairly sweep out of existence with a breath, if it had the power—that these alone keep the world and its inhabitants from falling this moment into a never-ending hell! And when the last pillar is removed, that instead of supporting the earth here, it may be “a pillar in the temple of God, to go no more out,” the ungodly world will find the truth of this Scripture, that the pillars of the earth are the saints of God, and that upon them hath he set the world, that they might bear it up for a time until God’s anger bursts forth upon it.

2. But these pillars are said to be “the Lord’s.” That is the only reason why the world stands upon them. They are “the Lord’s.” How much is contained in that expression! It implies that they are the Lord’s property, that they are his by gift and purchase, by whom he will be glorified, and in whom he will eternally take delight.

But the word “pillar” carries us back to their origin. For what is their primitive stock? The Lord says, by the prophet, “Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.” Isa 51:1 As though he would turn our eyes to our native origin. And what is that? The same quarry out of which the other stones come. If you and I, by God’s grace, are “living stones,” we come out of the same quarry with the dead, unbelieving, unregenerate world; there is no difference in that respect. Nay, we are perhaps sunk lower in the quarry than some of those in whom God never has and never will put his grace. It is not the upper stratum, what is called “the capstone,” of the quarry, which is taken to be hewn into a pillar; they go deep down into the pit to get at the marble which is to be chiselled into the ornamental column. So with God’s saints. They do not lie at the top of the quarry; but the

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Lord has to go down very low, that he may bring up these stones out of the depths of the fall, and lift them, as it were, out of deeper degradation than those which lie nearer the surface.

I remember reading once an expression which a Portland quarryman used when he was asked a question with respect to the hard labour of getting out the stone. He said, "It is enough to heave our hearts out." The stone lay so deep, and required such severe bodily exertion, that the labourer was forced to throw not only all his weight, sinews, and muscles into the work, but his very heart also. So it is with the elect of God. They are sunk so low, in such awful depths of degradation, at such an infinite distance from God, so hidden and buried from everything good and godlike, that, so to speak, it required all the strength and power of Jehovah to lift them out of the pit. In raising them out of the quarry of nature, he spent, as it were, upon them all his heart; for wherein was the heart of God so manifested as in the incarnation of his only begotten Son, and in the work, righteousness, sufferings, blood, and death of the Lord Jesus Christ?

These pillars, then, are in themselves utterly unworthy to occupy a place in the temple above. But God has chosen them in Christ, fixed his love upon them, and for that reason he will have them eternally with him. But these pillars being destined to occupy a glorious place in the temple above, need a great deal of hewing out, a vast deal of chiselling into shape and form. God's people require many severe afflictions, harassing temptations, and many powerful exercises to hew them into anything like shape, to chisel them into any conformity to Christ's image. For they are not like the passive marble under the hands of the sculptor, which will submit without murmuring, and, indeed, without feeling, to have this corner chipped off, and that projecting angle rounded by the chisel; but God's people are living stones, and, therefore, feel every stroke. Instead, therefore, of lying passive, they too often resemble a refractory patient under the surgeon's hands, when he is undergoing some operation, which requires him to lie perfectly still.

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They writhe so under the keen knife, that they give the operator ten times more trouble than if they were dead bodies, which the anatomist or dissector could cut and hack at pleasure, without any feeling on their part at all.

We are so tender-skinned that we cannot bear a thread of trouble to lie upon us, we shrink from even the touch of the probe. To be hewed then, and squared, and chiselled by the hand of God into such shapes and forms as please him, O, what painful work it is! But could the pillar know, could it tell what the sculptor was doing, would it not see that not a single stroke was made in vain? The sculptor, we know, must not make a single hair's breadth stroke too little or too much in some parts of the marble, or he will spoil the statue. He knows perfectly well where to place the chisel, and in what direction, and with what force to strike it with the mallet. And does not God, who fixes the spiritual pillars each in their destined spot, that they may be "as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace," {Ps 144:12} know where to inflict the stroke, what carnal projection to chip off, and how to chisel the whole column, from the base to the capital, so that it shall wear just the very shape and the very same proportion which he designs that it should wear?

If the Lord, then, is at work upon our souls, we have not had, we are not now having, we shall never have, one stroke too much, one stroke too little, one stroke in the wrong direction, but there shall be just sufficient to work in us that which is pleasing in God's sight, and to make us that which he would have us to be. My friends, what a deal of trouble should we be spared if we could only patiently submit to the afflicting stroke, and have no will but his.

These pillars, then, are "the Lord's." And do you not think that he will take good care of them? He will not suffer them, like the pillars of the heathen temples, or the columns and arches of our ancient abbeys, to fall into ruin; but he will preserve them from injury here until he removes them into their eternal abode, which the glory of God shall lighten, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof.

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This is their future destiny, but its glorious nature is at present hid under an impenetrable veil. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," says John 1Jo 3:2 and, therefore, the Lord, in the text, speaks more of what the saints are now, than what they will be hereafter. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory."

II. The same saints, then, who are called "pillars" in the end of the verse, are called "poor" and "beggars" in the beginning. They are the same persons, but different terms are employed to present them to us in different points of view.

1. They are called, then, "poor." But what is it to be poor, and who are they that are designated by that term? By "the poor," literally, we generally understand those who are completely destitute of all that the world esteems to be riches. A poor man, therefore, spiritually, is one made to feel destitute of the true riches, of gospel substance, of the fruits and graces of the blessed Spirit, in a word, of everything which God and his people consider the only precious and enduring treasure. But into this state of felt destitution and poverty no man can sink by any power or will of nature. This is the Lord's work upon the conscience; as we read in the preceding verse, "The Lord maketh poor." A man may, indeed, try to make himself poor from the force of some convictions in the conscience, as the Papist puts on the hair-shirt; but, I believe, what he throws away with one hand, he will gather up with the other. Poverty naturally is a most painful and trying thing to the flesh; but poverty spiritually is far more trying and painful to the spirit. For natural poverty can last, at the most, but for a few years, but spiritual poverty, if unrelieved, (though the Lord never leaves it unrelieved) threatens to be but the commencement of death eternal. So that spiritual poverty, is far more oppressive, trying, and distressing to a man's spirit than natural poverty can be to any man's flesh.

To be poor, then, is to be feelingly destitute of everything spiritually good. The Lord anoints the eyes of his quickened family to

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see what true religion is. He shews them that true riches, without which all is poverty and want, consist in the manifested favour of God, in the work of the Spirit upon the heart revealing the love and blood of Jesus, in the personal possession of the fruits and graces of the Holy Ghost's inspiring, and in the manifested enjoyment of everything which can make a man holy, blessed, and happy.

Now when a man's eyes are enlightened to see in what true riches consist, the feeling that he wants them, and is in a state of thorough destitution without them, raises up in his conscience the conviction of his own poverty. But why should God's people be the only poor people spiritually? For this reason, because they are the only people who know what true riches are. I have read, in boyish days, a tale of a man who was imposed upon by a magician, to whom he sold his goods, and who, in return, gave him what appeared to be newly coined pieces of gold, which the merchant carefully hoarded in his chest; but, one day, looking into it to take a survey of his treasures, he found in it nothing but stones. The magician had so bewitched his eye-sight that he mistook rubbish for gold. I have sometimes thought that the Eastern tale would bear a religious application. Satan, that mighty juggler, that wonderful magician, so bewitches the minds of people according to those words, "Who hath bewitched you?" Ga 3:1 that they mistake shells and stones for precious jewels and coin fresh from the mint; and they hoard up these counterfeits as so much valuable treasure. Thus they accumulate a store of creature faith, and believe it to be the faith of God's elect; they lay up in their chest a large stock of the hypocrite's hope, and think it to be a "good hope through grace;" and they store in their strong box a vast amount of evidences which, when laid in the balance of the sanctuary, are altogether lighter than vanity. But, when in trouble they run to their strong box for evidences of their faith, their hope, their love, and their good deeds, they find nothing but dirt and rubbish in their place. Now God's people cannot be imposed upon fully and finally (though they may be deceived for a time) by Satan's jugglery; for

THE BEGGAR LIFTED UP FROM THE DUNGHILL they have "an unction from the Holy One," an "anointing which teacheth them of all things, and is truth, and no lie" 1Jo 2:20,27 and in the light and life of this divine teaching they discern the reality from the counterfeit. As, therefore, they cannot, by any exercise of their natural powers, or by any industry of the flesh, obtain the true riches, they feel themselves pressed down into the depths of poverty.

Professors of religion, destitute of the power, have no objection to pilfer. They do not act up to the exposition of the eighth commandment in the Catechism, "To keep my hands from picking and stealing." No; they pick and steal their religion from books, from ministers, or from one another, without any anxious inquiry or painful suspicion whence they obtained their hope of eternal life; whether they got it from God or man, from the work of the Spirit, or the mere excitement of the flesh. But God's honest people cannot act thus. If the Lord himself, by a special work upon their conscience, and by a special manifestation of his mercy, love, and favour, do not pour into their hearts the true riches, they feel themselves totally and thoroughly destitute. They have an inward and deep-wrought conviction that without Christ they can do nothing; that their souls are by nature as helpless to come forth into the light of God's countenance as the dead body of Lazarus was to come forth from the tomb.

But this very soul-beggary brings them to the spot mentioned in the text, "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust." A sense of their deep spiritual poverty brings them into the dust. I think there is one text of Scripture which throws a peculiar light on the expression. It is in La 3:29, "He putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope." Look at the expression, "He putteth his mouth in the dust." It appears to have been the Jewish custom, in times of great calamity and humiliation, to put dust upon the head. It was so with Job's friends when they saw the calamitous state in which he was: "They sprinkled dust upon their heads." So the messenger who came to announce the taking of the ark had "earth upon his

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head,” as a mark of calamity 1Sa 4:12 and Tamar, when she had
been humbled by Amnon, put “ashes on her head.” 2Sa 13:19 Thus
to put the mouth in the dust is feelingly to sink down into a sense
of self-degradation, self-humiliation, and complete prostration of
soul before God.

We read of the Pharisee in the temple, that he stood praying.
His mouth was as high as it could be. And I should not be sur-
prised if the contemplation of his numerous good deeds, and the
complacent thought of the tithes he had paid, lifted him up fairly
upon his toes, so that he stood about two or three inches higher
than when he came into the temple. His mouth was not as low, but
as high as it could be. But the mouth of the gospel penitent is “in
the dust,” that is, it is as low as it can possibly fall. We cannot get
lower than the dust. When, then, the mouth is in the dust, it im-
plies the lowest spot of humiliation, degradation, self-abhorrence,
self-loathing, and prostration before the throne of the Most High
that the soul can get into. But it is a sense of poverty that brings a
man there. When our Queen steps on board her yacht she has a
carpet to walk upon from the shore; her royal feet must not even
touch the dust. But what think you of not merely the feet touching
it, but the mouth kissing it? O, what a stoop of degradation is that!
Not like the woman spoken of, De 28:56 who “would not adven-
ture to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness
and tenderness;” but to bring the lips so completely into it, and
to be so choked with the dust of our corruptions flying all around
us, through the blasts of Satan and the temptations of our carnal
minds, as not to be able to get our mouth from the ground, nor lift
it a single inch above the earth.

That was the spot of the Jewish church, La 3 when God brought
upon her such humbling dispensations. When she could no longer
walk she had to kneel; when she knelt she had to fall down on her
hands; and when her hands were struck from her; she had to sink
lower still, and to fall flat upon her face. Now that is just the precise
place to which the Lord brings his people. He finds them standing;

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he knocks their legs from under them, and brings them to their knees. He then strikes their hands from under them; their knees no longer support them, and they fall prostrate before Him in the dust. Until they get there there is no promise for them.

There are many of God's elect who have never yet lost their fleshly standing; never had the sinews of their self-righteousness cut; never, in the despondency of their sinking minds, either in body or soul, fallen down into the dust before God. But there is no use their talking about "a blessed Jesus" unless they have been there; there is no use their extolling the blood and righteousness of Christ, and heaven and glory, and all such beautiful things. These eternal realities are completely out of place; they have not got them in the right way. Therefore, all the beautiful expressions, and the glowing descriptions of Christ, and of his glorious Person and offices, which many eloquent preachers set before the people, are thrown away upon them. It is like talking Arabic to people who only understand English. They do not understand the language; it is all foreign to them. They may be much pleased with the pronunciation of the foreign tongue, with the melodious sounds of the language of Canaan, but they are as ignorant of its real meaning, of any one testimony of God in their consciences, or of any one ray of Christ's glory in their hearts, as you or I should be of the dialect of the centre of Africa.

Now the process that so cuts up self-righteousness, root and branch, in the soul, is the only process to bring it into the sweet enjoyment of gospel blessings. Many people do so mistake the road. If, this morning, instead of coming to the west, to Eden-street, I had gone to the east, to Zoar Chapel, I should certainly not now have been here. In like manner, a man can never reach heaven unless he travels heavenwards, Zion-wards, in the way that God has marked out for his people to walk in. It is a delusion to think that we are going to heaven unless we know something of divine teaching in the soul.

But if we know anything of divine teaching, we know what it

is to be poor and needy, we know what it is, more or less, to have our mouth in the dust. But I said that people mistake the way to heaven. The ordinary way is to set up a ladder to reach from earth to heaven, and progressively clambering up the different rounds, at last to climb up into the abode of God. But that is not the way of God's people. They have to go down, down, down, that they may be raised up. It is not with them first "up, up, up," to scale the battlements of heaven. Every such step upwards in self is in reality only a step downwards; but, on the other hand, every step downwards in self, downwards into the depths of poverty, downwards into felt misery, downwards into soul-trouble and the real groanings of a broken heart—every such step downwards in self is, in fact, a step upwards in Christ. Until we get to the very bottom there is no promise. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust." But how? He does it in a moment. The Lord does not raise up his people round by round, enabling them to clamber and crawl with their hands and feet to him. But, when he lifts up the poor out of the dust, he gives them a smile which reaches, so to speak, to the very bottom of their hearts; and that smile has such a miraculous power, such a drawing efficacy, that it lifts them in a moment out of the dust into the very bosom of God. When, therefore, the Lord raises up the poor out of the dust, he does not lift them up by a gradual process, step by step, as they went down. They were, perhaps, many years going down; but they are raised up in a moment. The God of all grace, by one word, or by one smile, lifts them up in a moment out of the lowest depths of felt degradation, "sets them among princes, and makes them inherit the throne of glory."

But we pass on to consider another portion of the text, where the saint is compared to a beggar; "and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill." "The beggar," naturally viewed, is in a lower condition than "the poor". It is, as it were, the *ne plus ultra*, the furthest extreme of pauperism. Poverty can go no lower than the condition of a mendicant. There are many "poor" people who have never come down so low as beggary. Yet every child of God must not

THE BEGGAR LIFTED UP FROM THE DUNGHILL only go down into soul-poverty, he must sink also into the lowest extreme of it; he must fall into beggary and mendicancy before he can be raised up to inherit the throne of glory. To be a beggar naturally is to gain one's daily bread by hourly petitioning, to have scarcely a rag to call one's own; to possess neither house nor home, neither cupboard nor pantry, but to live day to day on the compassion and bounty of others. Take this idea into spiritual things. A man is not a spiritual beggar who has a single penny of merit locked up at home, who has a single good thing in the strong chest of his own heart.

To be a beggar spiritually he must have nothing that he does not get by petitioning. But how humbling to nature, how crushing to the pride of man, that he cannot do anything by nature spiritually good, that he cannot create his own heart anew, that he cannot save his own soul, that he cannot believe, nor hope, nor love—in a word, that he cannot by any will or power of his own recommend himself to the favor of God! The beggar, you know, has nothing to work with or to trade upon. If he had but a bit of ground given him, he might till and cultivate it; if he had but a little money, he might buy and sell with it. But he has nothing to begin with, no point to start from; for “the destruction of the poor is their poverty.” I am speaking, mark you, of a man reduced, say, by illness to beggary, not of street mendicants, who are generally imposters. So with God's people; if they could but work, if they could but cultivate nature's plot, and obtain a spiritual crop; or if they had but a little stock to begin with, which they might put out to interest and receive back with usury, why, then they would not be beggars. But to have everything so knocked out of their grasp, that they have not a single good thing, which they can call their own, and therefore are compelled to beg, and cry, and petition the Lord for everything spiritual and gracious, how humbling to the pride of man is this! Yet God's people know that they must walk in it.

Did you, did I, ever get anything but by begging? Have not God's ministers to beg for well nigh every sermon, to cry and

groan for well nigh every text, for power to be felt in their souls, for thoughts to be inspired, and for words to be dictated? And have not the people of God, the hearers, to beg for every blessing at the footstool of mercy which they hope to receive, for every token for good, for every testimony, for every smile, for every evidence, every witness, that they are the Lord's? Have not God's people, with the utmost importunity, to besiege the throne of grace that they may receive those mercies as a free gift, without which they cannot live contented, nor die happy? If you are not a beggar, if you have a little stock yet in hand, a little field to till and cultivate of your own, you are not fit for the kingdom of God. Every penny of nature's stock must be spent before you can receive out of Christ's fulness grace for grace. Till you are a beggar, you have no manifested interest in gospel blessings.

But, having looked at the character of the spiritual beggar, we will accompany him to the spot where he is said to sit; for the beggar is to be lifted off "the dunghill." In this spiritual portrait which the Holy Ghost has given of a saint, how he seems to have heightened the colouring with every stroke of the pencil. He first of all describes him as "poor," and in the "dust." But this is not strong enough; this does not convey a sufficient idea of what a saint is. He takes the pencil again, and, so to speak, gives another touch to heighten it, and to set it before our eyes more clearly and vividly. He brings before us not only a poor man, but a "beggar," a mendicant. But that is not enough; the brush must once more touch the painting in order to heighten the description, and bring forth the character in its true colours; he, therefore, gives us the "the dunghill" as the seat on which the beggar sits. Now could you for a moment figure this in your mind's eye upon canvas; could you depict to yourself a saint of God, as here described, you would see in one corner a representation of a poor man with his mouth in the dust, and a voice would say within you, "That is a saint." But the same voice would also say as to the prophet, "Turn again;" see another sight.

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In another corner of the picture you would see a beggar clothed in rags, like Lazarus, with wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores, not sitting in a chair; no, nor even resting on the ground, but lying on a dunghill. What, you may ask, does that mean? Surely it represents the deep corruptions of our heart. But, Hannah! how could you ever drop such a word as that? Talk about the dunghill in polite company! Introduce such a vulgar expression into the word of God! What must our elegant preachers, and our refined ministers in their gowns and gold rings, think of you to talk about a dunghill? And what must those, who are always confident, think of such a corruption preacher as you, Hannah? For surely there is something about corruption here. Hannah, in her song of praise, had not forgotten the dunghill. But some, who profess to have been once grovelling there, have so entirely forgotten it, that they never even speak of dung-gate now; and as to ever casting a glance over their shoulders, or even thinking for a moment of the dunghill, or of those that are on it, that is as much out of their sight as though it had no existence. But Hannah remembered it; and felt as the church expresses herself, "Remembering my affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall; my soul hath these still in remembrance, and is humbled in me." {La 3:19,20} I shall not now, however, attempt to lay open the contents of this dunghill, which are better felt than described; though, I believe, I should offend some of your delicate nerves were I to bring forward some of the monsters which I have felt to lurk there, or even hint at some of the sights and smells which have disgusted me to the deepest self-loathing. Nor shall I dwell on what it is to be in it; but content myself with saying that "the dunghill" represents our corrupt nature; and that it must be spiritually opened up in a man's conscience to know what it is. For it is out of it that the beggar is to be lifted to inherit the throne of glory; and if a man has never been in it, he cannot be lifted out of it.

To be then in the dunghill is to know and feel something of the deep corruptions of our nature. And O, the suffocating sensations

which a man has when there. It is no pleasant spot; the stench in the nostrils is so overcoming, the sights presented to the eye are so disgusting that I am sure if a man knows what corruption is, he will never want to be in corruption. It is a libel—I might even use a shorter and more expressive word—but it is a libel upon experimental preachers to say that they gloat over corruption, that they either love it, or love to feel it, or love to speak about it. They know too well the misery of it to love it; they feel too much the suffocating stench of it to be pleased either with it, or their abode in it. But God puts them there for wise purposes—that they may abhor themselves, and love him the more when, from time to time, he lifts them out of it. But you see there is no lifting out till a man gets in. God has for the most part connected his mercies with our miseries, his promises with our necessities; as, therefore, he has suited his displays of mercy and grace to certain spots and places, we must go into those spots and places to realize the promised mercies.

But, I venture to say, that if some of those who are continually aiming their arrows of contempt against those whom they term corruption preachers, were told that, in the filthiest alley in London, in the very dirtiest house in that alley, in the most noisome garret, in that house, and in the foulest corner of that garret, there was a bag of gold, and if they went there they might take it for their pains—I am inclined to think that some who have such nice and delicate feelings that they cannot bear to hear a word about corruption from the pulpit, would not mind grubbing up to their very elbows in this filthy corner if they could only thereby get hold of the bag. Now the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures has suited his promises of mercy and grace to the lowest depths of man's felt filth and misery; it is, therefore, in those spots that grace and mercy are found. But who likes the noisome garret, or who loves its filthy corner? Nobody surely who has any cleanly or tender feeling. But if he knows that he must go there, that he may find the precious promises of the blessed Bible, and receive the sweet enjoyments

of God's favour, he is even reconciled to endure nature's filth and guilt, if the Lord is but pleased there to whisper a sweet testimony that he is eternally, unchangeably His.

The Lord, then, has adapted these promises to a certain state, and he brings his people into that state that he may give them the promises, and make them sweet, savoury, and unctuous. It is out of the dust and out of the dunghill that God lifts his saints, and "sets them among princes"—O, what a change!—"and makes them inherit the throne of glory." What is it but the depth of their degradation that makes their exaltation so great? It is the sin and guilt, felt ruin and misery, that so enhance the blessings when they come down from God. What a change was it for Joseph, to be taken out of the dungeon, where his beard was not shaved, nor his raiment changed, and made second to Pharaoh in all the land of Egypt? Did not the dungeon make the honour all the greater? So, spiritually, it is bringing the soul out of the dust, and lifting the beggar out of the dunghill, that makes the promises so precious, it is this which, when he comes to "inherit the throne of glory," makes the change so blessed and so conspicuous.

This, then, is what God has told us about the saints; and happy are we, if we can trace in our hearts anything of God's work as here laid down, if we can discover anything of the teaching of the Spirit in our souls, so as to be either with our mouth in the dust, or on the dunghill, or sitting among the princes of God's people. To have the least spark or particle of divine teaching is an inestimable mercy, and a sure pledge and foretaste of eternal glory.

57 THE FRUIT OF THE LIPS

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London
20th August, 1843

"I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will

heal him" Isa.57:19

The Lord had said in verse 16 of this chapter: "I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made." As though the Lord saw, so to speak, the fruitlessness of contending with man that all his stripes were thrown away upon him; that his severest chastisements, unaccompanied by grace, did not bring him into submission and humility; that all his heaviest strokes could do would but wear the spirit out and make it fail before him, but that his contending in anger would never make him a partaker of godly sorrow, nor cause him to lie low at his feet. "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart" (verse 17).

The Lord tells us here why he smote his people. It was for the iniquity of their covetousness; the word "covetousness" pointing out what the human heart is chiefly engaged upon. For we must not limit the expression merely to avarice after money, but consider it as embracing the going out of the heart of man after the things of time and sense, the insatiable desire of the carnal mind after earthly and sensual gratification. This covetousness God speaks of as iniquity, the iniquity of man lying in this: that he loves everything earthly and sensual better than God, that he seeks pleasure from every object but the Lord, that he wilfully and greedily runs into every base lust, making carnal things his delight and happiness. Now the Lord, provoked by the iniquity of his covetousness, smote him with stroke upon stroke, with disappointment upon disappointment, with affliction upon affliction, with trouble upon trouble. But it was all thrown away. It did not raise up in him a spiritual work, it did not bring him to the Lord's feet, it did not change his will; it did not renew him in the spirit of his mind, but it left him as it found him: earthly, sensual, and dead; or rather, it left him worse than it found him for his heart became more hardened and his conscience more stupefied than before. The Lord, therefore,

adds: "I hid me;" as though he would try what that would do. He took no apparent notice of him. The Lord would not appear conspicuously in a way of providence. He shut himself up, as it were, in his own glory, and covered himself with a cloud, so that no ray should pass through. But that failed also. "I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." So obstinate, rebellious, wayward, perverse a wretch is man that no step which the Lord could take in a way of judgment or anger, independent of the Spirit's operations (for that is the point I am endeavouring to enforce) could ever have the least effect upon him. Now do not you parents often see this very thing in your children naturally? You sometimes cannot make anything of them; there is such a frowardness and perversity of disposition in them, that all your chastisements and every means you employ to make them better, only seem to make them worse. They go on frowardly in the way of their heart; and you cannot, with all the pains you take with them, make them one whit better. Now what children often are to their parents, such are we toward God. His stripes, his frowns, his hiding himself, his sharp afflictions, do not produce in us any spiritual good; but we go on frowardly in the way of our heart, muttering perverseness, full of rebellion, peevishness, and discontent; and though we may feel the rod of God upon us, yet there is no breaking down of heart, no submission of soul, no contrition of spirit before him. The Lord therefore says: "I have seen his ways." What a creature he is! What an obstinate, perverse, rebellious wretch, and that wrath and judgments will not mend him. It is, then, as though he added: "I will alter my plan altogether. I see that there is no use in smiting and afflicting him with these sharp troubles; he is only the worse for it; only the more rebellious, more perverse, more froward. I have seen his ways, and will heal him." The Lord speaks as though he would change his conduct towards him. If he could not frown him into obedience, he would kiss him into it. If, he could not by the manifestation of his anger, make him walk in a right way, he would do so by love, and as he could not bend the

heart by trouble, he would break it by an overwhelming sense of grace, mercy, and pardon. In that way, then, does the Lord gain his point and bring about his blessed purpose, warming the soul into fruitfulness by summer suns, which wintry blasts could never produce, pardoning sin, and thus making it hateful; overcoming the soul with his goodness, so as to new model it into obedience; and by communicating a new heart and a new spirit, bring out of it freely and cheerfully that humility, submission, devotedness, and affection, which stripes and blows could never have extorted. This, then, is the connexion of the text. And this slight sketch of the context may, with God's blessing better prepare our minds to see and feel something of the sweetness and beauty of the text.

I. What are we to understand by the expression which meets us in the first clause: "I create the fruit of the lips?" I understand by it that which grows upon, or rather out of the lips. Just in the same way as the fruit naturally is that which grows upon or grows out of a tree, so spiritually that which grows upon and out of a gracious man's lips is here called "the fruit of the lips." But cannot a man say just what he pleases? Not to God's honour and glory. If it is true that God creates the fruit of the lips, and that there is not a single word which man's lips can speak for the honour of God except what the Lord himself creates by as great a miracle as when he called the world into existence, what a death-blow to human merit, creature righteousness, fleshly sanctification, legal obedience, free will, and the whole spawn of Arminianism! What a sweeping off at a single stroke all the piety and holiness of the creature, if it is true, as most true it is, that a man not only cannot create a spiritual thought, nor perform a spiritual action, but that he cannot even create a spiritual word that he cannot actually bring forth from the door of his lips anything which God calls fruit, except it be created in him by a miraculous putting forth of supernatural power. But, however the wise and learned may call this enthusiasm, or however Pharisees and Free-willers may rebel against God's sovereignty and man's helplessness, yet all the living family are taught, some-

times by painful and sometimes by pleasurable experience, that they cannot find in their lips a single spiritual word to breathe out secretly into the ears of God or before the ears of their fellow men, except the Lord the Spirit create it for and in them. The word of the lip, when it is such as the Lord calls fruit, is that which comes from the heart: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer." It is the heart must prompt the tongue, as we read: "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips." Unless heart and tongue go together, there is neither fruit in the one or the other. The Lord, then, by his blessed hand in the soul, creates a spiritual work within, and raises up spiritual feelings, spiritual desires, spiritual sensations; and as he produces this spiritual experience by putting forth his power in the heart, he creates also the fruit of the lips, that these spiritual sensations may find a vent through them. For it is as necessary that the Lord should create the fruit of the lips to express them, as that the Lord should create the fruit of the heart to feel them. We have, for instance, sometimes spiritual sensations heaving, fermenting, and working in our bosoms, but we cannot give them vent. They are sometimes too deep for utterance, "groanings which cannot be uttered," as says the apostle. Many of God's people cannot express what they feel, they have a clear experience, but a confused speech, they know what experimental truth and divine teachings are, but cannot defend the one nor explain the other. The Lord, therefore, must not only create the spiritual sensations, but he must create the spiritual expressions, that out of the heart, through the mouth, the fruit may come to his honour and praise.

The first sensation usually that God creates in the soul, is a feeling of its own guilt, ruin, and misery; and the first fruit of the lips that he creates as springing out of and corresponding with this spiritual sensation is confession. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive

us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” But of all humbling things confession is one of the most humbling. It is so even to man. We often feel ourselves to be wrong, but we cannot confess it. There is that wretched pride and self-justification often working in a man’s heart that he absolutely will not confess his faults to a fellow-creature, when his conscience all the time is condemning him. And so it is spiritually. It is a very hard spot to come into the presence of God with confession. Confession must be, as it were, squeezed out of us, pressed out of our heart by heavy burdens laid upon the conscience. An honest heaven-taught soul knows that there is no use mocking God with hypocritical confession, that to confess iniquity with the mouth and hug it in the bosom, is but to add sin to sin, that it must not, with Gehazi, stow the two talents of silver in the house, and then go and stand before its Master unabashed. But wherever the soul is truly humbled before God, and confession is created as the fruit of the lips, it always implies a desire to be spiritually delivered from the filth, guilt, and the power of the sin acknowledged. Thus confession, as one of the first and the earliest fruits of the lips, flows from a spiritual feeling of the burden of sin, a solemn hatred to it and abhorrence of it, as laid upon the conscience, a cry to the Lord to pardon it, and an earnest desire, in the strength of the Lord to be delivered from its dominion. Honest confession, then, as springing out of a heart made tender in God’s fear, is a supernatural creation of the Lord’s. To mock God with saying we are sorry, and then rush the next moment into the sin we profess to be sorry for, is but to deceive ourselves and insult him. Yet this is what we have done a thousand times, and shall do again if grace prevent not. So that no man comes to honest confession except God works confession in his heart; and thus making the heart and tongue move together, he creates confession as the fruit of the lips.

Now there is no promise of pardon of sin till there is confession of sin. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” But how many there are who talk about pardon and

forgiveness, who have never yet been brought to an honest confession; who have never yet put their mouth in the dust, bewailed themselves in the sight of God, nor acknowledged their sins in the bitterness of soul-trouble, with tears of contrition flowing down their cheeks and the sobs of godly sorrow heaving from their bosoms!

Another fruit of the lips which God creates is prayer. The Lord himself must pour out upon every child of his "the spirit of grace and of supplications," for unless he is pleased to create this fruit of the lips, there is no more spiritual prayer in our heart than there is in a corpse. We may indeed mock God by carnal petitions, or go through a formal round of daily prayer; but as to any spiritual breathing out of our wants into the bosom of God, as to any faith in blessed exercise whereby we come to the throne of mercy and grace, and, according to the injunction of the Holy Ghost, pour out our heart before him, there is not a single grain of this fruit till the Lord himself by a supernatural operation upon conscience, first creates the desire, and then gives power to breathe forth that desire in supplication at his feet. Now of this spirit of prayer, every living soul has a measure. When the Lord quickens the soul into spiritual life, he always gives "this spirit of grace and supplications;" and when once given, it is never wholly lost out of the heart. For the Lord who first creates this fruit of the lips, mercifully keeps it alive in the soul. "I will water it every moment," he says. He therefore feeds the lamp of intercession in the soul with the oil of the blessed Spirit, the unction of the Holy One; and though to our feelings we are often as dead and prayerless as if we had never felt the breath of the Spirit within, yet the Lord secretly again and again works upon the heart and causes this fruit to grow upon the lips. In this respect, as in others, we pass through many changes. We may sometimes, for instance, be in trouble, and yet cannot pray; be exercised in our minds, and yet cannot go to the throne of grace, nor vent our desire for deliverance into the ears of the Most High. We are often, too, in a state where there is no sigh nor cry going up out of

the heart; when the world seems to have full possession of us, and there is scarcely even the faintest desire to be brought out of this state, and to feel the weight and power of eternal things. Nor can we even feel what a sad state this is to be in, nor cry to the Lord to revive us again that we may rejoice in him, unless he once more create this fruit of the lips, and draw out our heart towards him.

But praise and thanksgiving is also a fruit of the lips, and as such is the special creation of God. What a sweet thing it is to bless and praise God! There is no feeling upon earth to equal it. To bless God for his unmerited mercy, for his undeserved favour, and for the testimonies of his goodness, is indeed a sweet employ. It may indeed be called a feeling and a foretaste of heaven, for will not the bliss of heaven much consist in blessing and praising God, in singing the "song of the Lamb," in giving vent to the happy feelings which will occupy and fill the soul? God teaches all his people, sooner or later, to bless and praise his name. But then they must go into very dark holes and corners, must often sink very low in their feelings, must be taught very sharp lessons within, must see themselves to be utterly helpless, and at times feel almost hopeless, in order that this fruit of the lips may be created by the hand of God in them. How often are we in that state when we can neither pray nor praise; when sullenness, frowardness, and peevishness seem to take such complete possession that so far from praising God, there is no power even to seek his face; and so far from blessing him, there are even dreadful things working up in the heart against him, which awfully manifest the enmity of the carnal mind! Those who are painfully exercised with such feelings are certain therefore that it is God's work to enable them to praise and bless his holy Name. And does not the heaven-taught soul come sometimes into this spot: "O that the Lord would give me something to praise him for, would bring me out of this trial, break this wretched snare, remove this awful temptation, lift me out of this providential difficulty, bless and water my soul, comfort my heart, strengthen my spirit, give me some testimony of his covenant love!" Says the soul:

“O how I would then bless and praise him! I would spend all my breath in exalting his holy Name.” But when the Lord withholds from the soul the blessings it so eagerly covets, it can only look at them at a great distance, view them wistfully, and long to experience them. But it says: “Until they come with power, until they are brought in with sweetness, until they are sealed upon my very heart, so as to take full possession of my breast, I cannot, I dare not, bless and praise his holy Name.” O what a dependent creature a heaven-taught soul is! How it hangs upon the Spirit of God to work in it that which is well pleasing in his sight, how convinced it is that it cannot feel nor confess sin, that it cannot breathe forth prayer nor praise unless the God of all grace create by his own powerful hand these blessed fruits of the lips! Are you so helpless in your feelings as this? Are you such complete dependants upon sovereign grace? Then you are spiritually taught of God; for it is God’s teaching in the soul which brings a man to an experimental knowledge of his own complete helplessness before him.

II. But we pass on to consider the other part of the text. “Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near.”

“Far off!” What means that? It means that the soul passing through that experience is separated, in its feelings, and at an infinite distance from God. There is an expression in Psalm 61 which throws a light upon the words “far off:” “From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I” (verse 2). David there speaks of himself as being at the end of the earth, and from that distant spot crying unto the Lord, he places as it were the whole habitable part of the globe betwixt himself and God. He speaks of himself as at the very furthest bound of creation; not resting in God’s bosom, nor lying at his footstool, nor taking hold of his strength, nor brought experimentally near by the application of the blood of sprinkling. The words “far off” and the corresponding expression “from the end of the earth” point out an experience of distance. But what has brought the soul into this state of felt distance from God? A

sense of sin laid on the conscience; for it is sin which makes the separation, according to those words: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God." Sin has actually separated; felt sin experimentally separates the soul from God. It drives it, so to speak, to the end of the earth, to the utmost limit of creature existence. Now this inward sense of being far off, is one of the most painful feelings that a quickened soul can experience. The ungodly, who are really afar off, know nothing experimentally of distance from God, for they have never been brought spiritually near. They have felt no "cords of love, no bands of a man" drawing them with sweet attraction to the throne of the Most High; they have never sighed after the sweet manifestations of God's mercy and love; but they live gladly and wallow wilfully in those things which separate the soul from its Maker. But those who are far off in their feelings, are such as have seen something of the beauty of the Lord, and felt the evil of sin, who spiritually know Jehovah's purity and the creature's impurity, and have experienced the inward curse, bondage, and condemnation of a holy law. A spiritual discovery of his purity and holiness, making manifest their own vileness, has thrust them down from him; not daring to draw near, nor able to approach; not feeling any spiritual access, but sighing and mourning over their evil hearts in the wilderness, in desolate places; and unable to move a single step forward because the Lord does not draw them by his smile. A man must know something experimentally of this before he is brought near. How can he know the feeling of nearness if he hath not known a feeling of distance? How can we know what it is to be brought from the end of the earth, by the manifestation of God's mercy and love, unless we have been driven there, in our feelings, by some manifestation of the wrath of God against sin? But to see the blessed Lord and not be able to draw near to him; to view his atoning blood at an infinite distance from us, his glorious righteousness well nigh out of sight, and his lovely Person out of the reach of our spiritual view, so as not to enjoy any access to these glorious realities, to know this experimentally, is to be far

off from God. And I believe that God's people know very much of this feeling. There is not much nearness in our day: not much dandling on the knees, not much smiling upon the soul, not many love visits, nor tokens communicated. There is, indeed, abundant talking about them; and there are abundance of people who profess to have them, but I fear they are, for the most part, cheats and counterfeits. The real people of God, the true-hearted family are, for the most part, afar off upon the sea, for it is a dark and cloudy day in which we live.

But the Lord has spoken of another character, and described him as one that is "near;" that is, one brought experimentally nigh, who has felt the blood of sprinkling reconciling him to God, who has had the veil taken from his heart, who has had power communicated to approach unto God, and had a measure of spiritual access unto and blessed communion with him. But what is remarkable is, that the same promise is given to each: "Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near." These two characters seem to include all the quickened family of God: for all who are made alive unto God are in one of these two states, experimentally far off or experimentally near, enjoying God's presence or mourning his absence, fasting or feasting, lamenting or rejoicing, crying or blessing, dandled in the bosom or weaned from the breast. We find no intermediate state spoken of, no middle class, they are either far off or they are near in feeling. God in this text seeming to recognise no other states but these two. Let me not, however, be misunderstood. We are often in neither one nor the other, but not as a matter of Christian experience. We have an experience of the flesh as well as of the spirit, and this experience of the flesh is coldness, deadness, worldliness, unbelief, and other corruptions. But the Lord does not recognise this as Christian experience, though too often the experience of a Christian. We say, therefore, that so far as we are under the teachings and leadings of the Spirit, we shall be experimentally far off and mourning distance, or experimentally near and enjoying access. Therefore, spiritually viewed, "far off " or "near"

includes all. But there are an abundance of persons everywhere who are neither one nor the other. They are never near by the spiritual manifestations of God's presence, they are never afar off in soul-trouble and soul-sadness. They occupy what they consider to be a middle spot, which is in fact no spot at all, for they know nothing of frowns or of smiles, of banishment or of return; they know nothing of God's anger nor of God's love, guilt nor pardon, misery nor mercy, helplessness nor help, weakness nor strength, but stand upon an empty profession, having the mere shell and outside of truth without being led by the Holy Spirit into the secrets of the sanctuary.

To God's people then, summed up in these two classes, those that are far off, those that are near, there is a promise given; and that promise is redoubled to point out its certainty: "Peace, peace, to him that is far off, and to him that is near." Bunyan well represents this in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, where he speaks of Christian after being entertained in the House Beautiful, going to sleep in the chamber called Peace. What blessed sensations are couched in that word Peace! It was the legacy that Jesus left to his church: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." The apostle says of it that it "passeth all understanding." Now many even of the Lord's people seem as if they wanted and were expecting raptures. There is, I believe, a vast deal of enthusiasm in the natural mind of man, as is evident from what I may call its religious history in all ages; and this leads many who, in other points, seem rightly taught; to look for wonderful visions, ecstasies and raptures, things which nature can imitate, or Satan, as an "angel of light" counterfeit. False churches have had abundance of these. There are some most remarkable accounts in the legends of the Roman Catholic Church of the ecstasies and raptures of their so-called saints. Satan, as an "angel of light" can counterfeit these things to delude souls. But, I believe, Satan cannot bring the peace of God into the conscience. He may kindle a sort of infernal ecstasy; he may dazzle the mind with his juggleries

and witcheries, and lift a man up in his own conceit into the “third heavens;” he may work upon the natural spirits and intoxicate the mind with the light and airy gas which he breathes into it. But he cannot speak gospel peace to the conscience; he cannot bring a holy calm into the soul. He could lash the waters of Gennesareth into a storm but there was only One who could say to them: “Peace, be still!” Satan may raise a storm in our carnal mind, but he cannot allay it; he cannot pour oil upon the waves, he cannot bring peace to the troubled breast and enable it to rest upon God. Of all spiritual blessings, none seem preferable to peace; and I believe that is what a child of God covets more than anything. For O how much is implied in the word peace! Is not man by nature an enemy to God? Then to be saved he must be reconciled, and that implies peace. Is not his heart often troubled, as the Lord said: “Let not your heart be troubled!” Then he wants peace. Is not his mind often agitated and tossed up and down by conflicting emotions? Then he wants peace to calm it. And when he has to lie upon his dying bed, O if he can but lie there in peace, peace with God through Jesus Christ, and a holy calm comes over his soul, flowing out of manifested mercy and felt reconciliation, it will beat all the raptures in the world. How often we hear of a triumphant death-bed; and how Arminians of all shades and grades are continually trumpeting forth from their pulpits and publishing in their periodicals, triumphant deathbeds! May God, in his mercy, give me a peaceful one! It is better to close one’s eyes with the sweet enjoyment of the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, than to have all the raptures and ecstasies which may spring out of an excited nature. But to be blessed with peace, through the blood of sprinkling, before the soul glides out of its earthly tabernacle to enter into the haven of peace above, this indeed will make a death-bed happy, this will extract every thorn from the dying pillow, and enable the departing believer to say, with holy Simeon: “Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”

The word is redoubled, like Pharaoh's dream (Gen.41:32), to show the certainty of it: "Peace, peace;" as though the Lord would not content himself with saying it but once. He was so determined that it should come that he says: "Peace, peace." There is also another thing connected perhaps with the reduplication of the expression, that it becomes more especially promised to each of the characters mentioned in the text. Peace to him that is far off, and peace to him that is near. Perhaps thy soul is far off upon the sea, tossed up and down with doubts and fears, and exercised with sharp temptations and afflictions. There is peace promised to thee, though in thy feelings thou art far off from God. But another here, perhaps, is in a different state; his soul is indulged with some nearness of access to the throne of mercy. There is peace for thee; for thou needest peace as much as thy brother that is far off. If his troubled soul requires it to bring him near, thou needest it to keep thee near. Both need it, and both shall have it, for the promise is given to such.

III. "I will heal him." That closes the promise; that is the finishing stroke to God's manifested mercy. "I will heal him." As though the Lord had said: "He is a poor leprous wretch; he has an incurable disease upon him; he must die of his wounds, and bleed to death unless I step in; but he shall not die of his wounds, he shall not bleed to death, I will heal him. Whatever be his malady, whatever be the wounds of his conscience, I will cure him; he shall not perish; though he is beyond all human cure, he is not out of the reach of my healing hand."

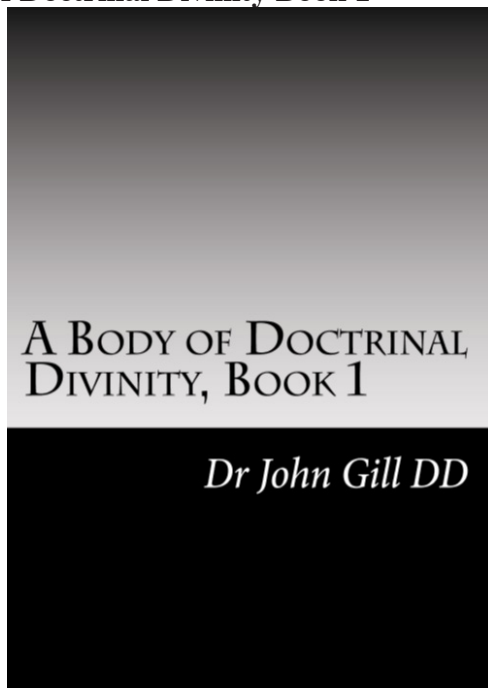
These are sweet and precious promises, are they not? But where must we be, and what must we be, in order to value them? What must we know and feel to have a part in them, and to experience them? Must we not be spiritually in the same spots to which they are addressed? If, for instance, we can always confess our sins; if we can pray when we please, and bless God when we please, what manifested interest have we in the promise: "I create the fruit of the lips?" If we never are far off in feeling or never near in feeling;

if we are never tossed upon the wave or never borne into the harbour of safety; what can we experience, what can we want to know of the promise: "Peace, peace?" If we are never sick and diseased, full of wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, a mass of filth and corruption before God, what manifested interest can we have, or want to have, in the promise: "I will heal him?" All God's promises are adapted to certain stages and states, certain characters and persons; so that unless we are experimentally in those states or those stages, and are those characters, the promises, however great and precious, are absolutely nothing to us. When the Lord, therefore, puts us into these states, it is that he may make the promises precious; and when he ratifies and fulfils any promise in the soul, he endears that promise by that very state in which the soul was before the promise came. Thus until we come into such desperate circumstances that none but the God of all grace can, by stretching out his hand, save and bless us, until we are utterly weaned from creature help, false hope, carnal wisdom, and fleshly strength, we are not in a fit state to receive the manifold mercy of God. We are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and know not that we are wretched and poor and miserable and blind and naked (Rev.3:17).

Every soul, then taught of God, that is in this state, has an interest in this promise. You may not be able to realise it, you may not be able to rise up to it, but I know this, you will be crying to God to fulfil it in your souls. You cannot do without the manifestation of peace, more or less powerfully in your conscience; and if the Lord has brought you there, he will in his own time and way open up these sweet promises, and convey the riches couched in them into your poor and needy heart. To him may we be kept ever looking; on him may our eyes be ever fixed, that he would fulfil his promises in our soul's experience, and do for us far more than we can even ask or think!

For are not these blessings worth seeking? When sickness comes and death draws near, when weeping relatives and anxious

friends surround the dying bed, will you not want peace, peace, in your soul, that you may be able to look with joy into eternity, and resign your departing spirit with calm and holy confidence into the hands of God? Sin has set us far off from God. Where this is truly and deeply felt, we shall want to be brought near by the blood of sprinkling. And this alone will give support in life comfort in death, and happiness in eternity.

Further Publications**A Body Of Doctrinal Divinity Book 1****A System of Practical Truths**

Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Created by David Clarke CertEd

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Black & White on White paper

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BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic

THIS IS BOOK 1 Treating The Subjects:

Of God, His Works, Names, Nature, Perfections And Persons. And
Contains:

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1 Of The Being Of God

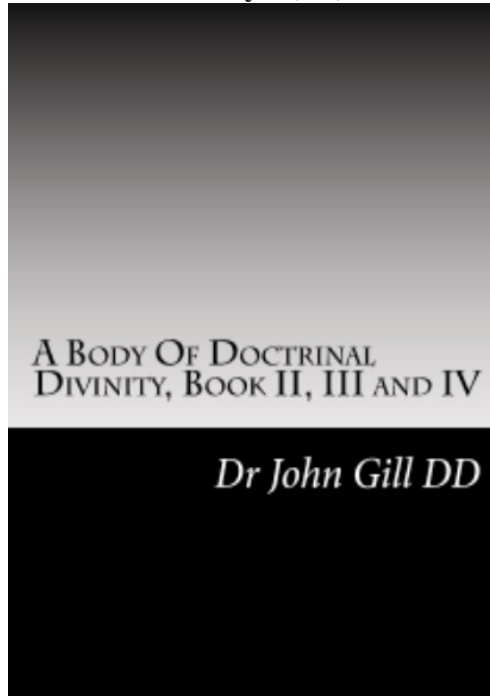
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- 27 Of A Plurality In The Godhead, Or, A Trinity Of Persons In The Unity Of The Divine Essence.
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The Father.

30 Of The Distinct Personality, And Deity Of The Son.

31 Of The Distinct Personality, And Deity Of The Holy Spirit.

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity II, II,IV



A System Of Practical Truths

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Chapter II Of The Special Decrees Of God, Relating To Rational Creatures, Angels, And Men; And Particularly Of Election.

Chapter III Of The Decree Of Rejection, Of Some Angels, And Of Some Men.

Chapter IV Of The Eternal Union Of The Elect Of God Unto Him.

Chapter V Of Other Eternal And Immanent Acts In God, Particularly Adoption And Justification.

Chapter VI Of The Everlasting Council Between The Three Divine Persons, Concerning The Salvation Of Men.

Chapter VII Of The Everlasting Covenant Of Grace, Between The Father, And The Son, And The Holy Spirit.

Chapter VIII

Of The Part Which The Father Takes In The Covenant.

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Chapter 8 Of The Session Of Christ At The Right Hand Of God

Chapter 9 Of The Prophetic Office Of Christ

Chapter 10 Of The Priestly Office Of Christ

Chapter 11 Of The Intercession Of Christ

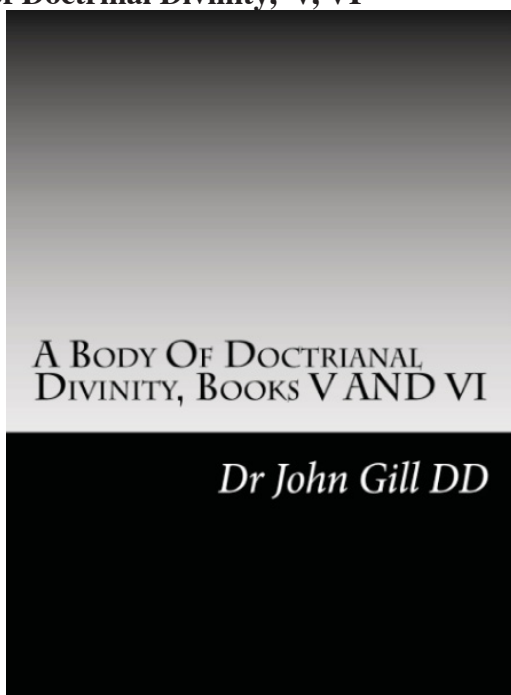
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A Body of Doctrinal Divinity, V, VI



A System OF Practical Truths

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Chapter 3 Of The Active Obedience Of Christ In His State Of Hu-

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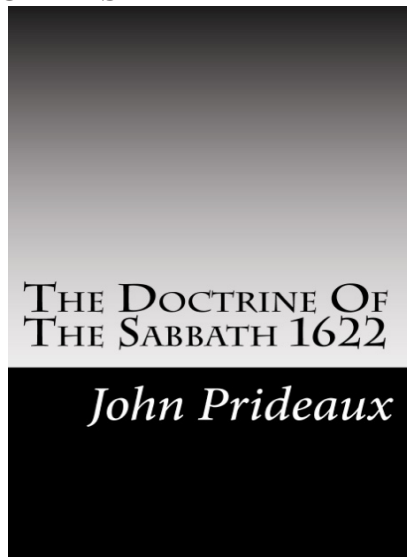
Chapter 11 Of Regeneration

Chapter 12 Of Effectual Calling

Chapter 14 Of Sanctification

Chapter 15 of the perseverance of the saints

The Doctrine Of The Sabbath 1622



Authored by Dr John Prideaux, Created by David Clarke

5.25" x 8" (13.335 x 20.32 cm)

Black & White on White paper

148 pages

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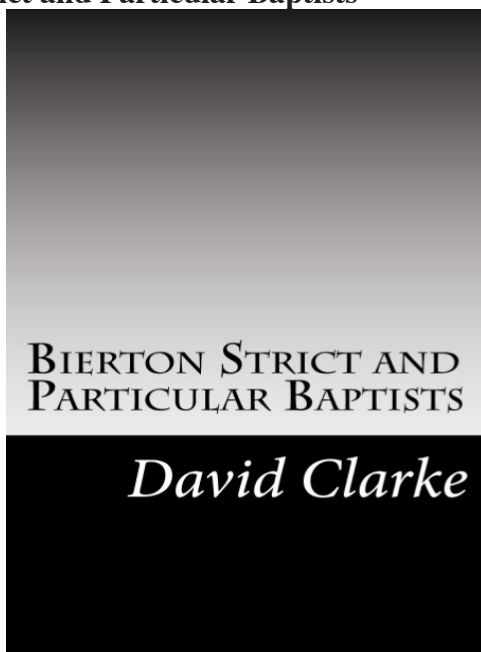
ISBN-10: 1727722906

BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Soteriology

Of all the controverts which have exercised the Church of Christ, there is none more ancient than that of the Sabbath: So ancient that it took beginning even in the infancy of the Church, and grew up with it. For as we read in the Acts There rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees, which believed, saying, that it was needful to circumcise the people, and to command them to keep the law of Moses; whereof the Sabbath was apart: Which in the general, as the apostles labours to suppress in their first General Council,

held in Jerusalem: So did S. Paul, upon occasion of whose ministry this controversy first began, endeavor what he could against the particular, shapely reproving those which hallowed yet the Jewish Sabbath and observed days, and months, and times, as if he had bestowed his labor in vain upon them. But more particularly in his epistle to the Colossians, Let no man judge you in respect of a holy day or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days, which were a shadow of things to come but the body is of Christ. Both which expressions of Paul are in this following discourse produced to this very purpose. Yet notwithstanding all this care both generally of the Apostles and more especially of Paul to suppress this error; it grew up still and had its patrons and abettors.

This reproduction of, 'The doctrine of the Sabbath,' by Dr. John Prideaux has been presented for those who have been troubled by the insistence of those religious people who insist that the first day of the week is the Sabbath day and to be kept holy, as dictated by the law of Moses. It is not. We include also Dr. John Gill on the subject of the circumstances of public worship as to place and time. It is the view of this publisher that the time and place of Christian worship it is a matter for the Christian community to decide and is not legislated in the scriptures.

Bierton Strict and Particular Baptists

My Testimony and Confession

Authored by Mr David Clarke Cert.E

List Price: \$13.99

5.25" x 8" (13.335 x 20.32 cm)

Black & White on White paper

376 pages

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BISAC: Biography & Autobiography / Religious

This book tells the story and life of David Clarke in the form of an autobiography. It is no ordinary book in that David and his brother were both notorious criminals in the 60's, living in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, where they were MODs. They were both sent to prison for carrying a fire arm without a license and malicious wounding. They were however both converted from crime to Christ after which they turned their lives around and from crime

to Christ. This story tells of David's Conversion in 1970 and that of Michael, 1999 some 30 years later.

It tells of their time in HMP Canterbury Prison and David's time in HMP Wormwood Scrubs and then Dover Borstal. It also tells of David's criminal activity and the crimes he committed before his miraculous conversion from crime to Christ, during a bad experience on LSD, in 1970.

It tells how he became a Christian over night, how he learned to read in order to come to a fuller knowledge of the gospel. He learned to read through reading the bible and classical Christian literature.

He tells of the event that led to him making a confession to the police about 24 crimes he had committed since leaving Dover Borstal in 1968 and of the court case where he was not sentenced.

It tells of his life as a member of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church, which was a Gospel Standard cause, and how he was called by the Lord and sent by the church to preach the gospel.

David tells of the various difficulties that he faced once he discovered the many doctrinal errors amongst the various Christian groups he met and of the opposition that he experience when he sought to correct them. David recorded his experience and finding in his book "The Bierton Crisis" 1984 written to help others.

David's tells how his brother Michael was untouched by his conversion and how he continued his flamboyant lifestyle ending up doing a 16 year prison sentence, in the Philippines, in 1996, where he died in 2005.

It tells how David's educated himself and went on to Higher education, and graduated with a Certificate in Education and how he went on to teach Electronics, for over 20 years, in colleges of Higher and Further Education.

It tells how David felt compelled to write this story under the title, "Converted On LSD Trip". once he got news of his brothers arrest, in the Philippines, via ITN Television news broadcast, in

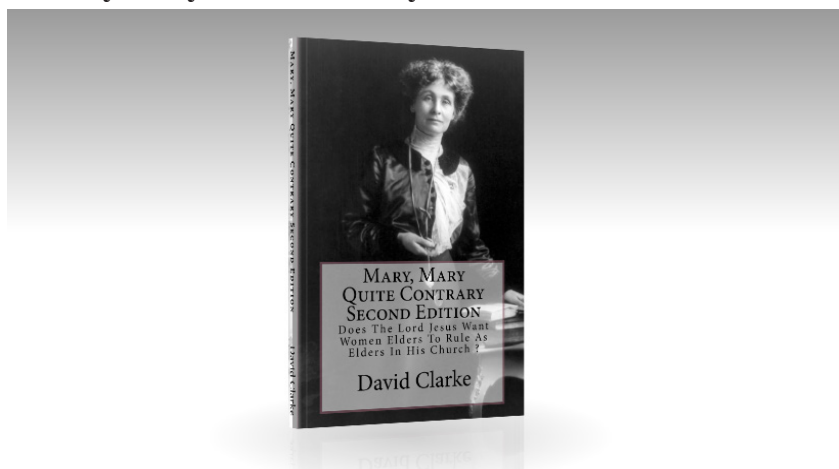
1995. This book was published when he got news of his brothers conversion from crime to Christ in 1999, which was after serving 5 years of his 16 year sentence.

David tells how Michael too was converted through him reading C.S. Lewis's book, "Mere Christianity", and him being convinced that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God, after this it tells of David's mission to the Philippines to bring help and assistance to Michael, in 2001 and of their joint venture in helping in the rehabilitation of many former convicted criminals, not only in New Bilibid Prison but other Jails in the Philippines.

This story is told in there book, "Trojan Warriors", that contains the testimonies of 66 notorious criminals who too had turned there lives around, from crime to Christ, 22 of which testimonies are men on Death Row.

David say he believes his story could be of great help to any one seeking to follow the Lord Jesus

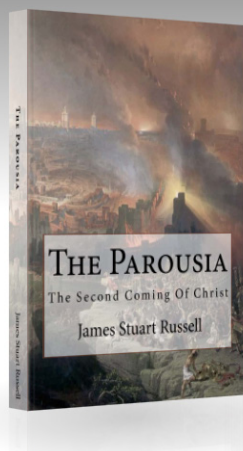
Mary Mary Quite Contrary



By David Clarke

When treating the subject of women elders in the church we

are not dealing with the affairs of a secular society and so it has nothing to do with women's rights, equality of sex or race in the world. This matter only relates to men and women in a Christian church. It is about the rules of the house of God, which is the church of the living God and rules for those who are members of the body of Christ and members of an heavenly county. The Suffragettes Emmeline Pankhurst 1858 -1928) was a Suffragette and worked very hard to bring equal rights for women to vote as men. In the year of her death all women over 21 gained the right to vote. The Suffragette movement brought about many changes for the better in a secular society but not so for women seeking to follow Christian principles. One of her famous quotes was, "Trust in God She shall provide". Terms which do not reflect Christian beliefs. We know God will provide and He is not a she. In the USA and the UK, women's political rights were brought into general political consciousness by the suffragettes and since then there have been legal rights granted to the Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups, same sex marriages, along with the development of the feminist movement and the appointment of persons from the LGBT community to responsible positions in the Church of England. All of this has caused conflict in the Christian community due to differences beliefs of right and wrong. This book seeks to show what the bible has to say about the role of women in the church and family. Since these rules are taught by the Apostles of Christ they are the word of God to us and we should obey. The secular world may differ and turn from the narrow path taught in scripture but we should follow the word of God, this is our wisdom.



James Stuart Russell

A reformation – indeed – a revolution of sorts is taking place in modern evangelical Christianity. And while many who are joining in and helping promote this movement are not even aware of it, the book you hold in your hand has contributed greatly to initiating this new reformation. This “new” movement is sometimes called full preterism, (Also, and preferably by this writer, Covenant Eschatology). It is the belief that all Bible prophecy is fulfilled. The famous evangelist Charles H. Spurgeon was deeply impressed with the scholarly, solid research in the book, although he did not accept the “final” conclusions reached by Russell. In modern times, this work has, and continues to impress those who read it. The reason is simple, the New Testament is emphatic and unambiguous in positing Christ’s coming and the end of the age for the first century generation. To say this has troubled both scholars and laymen alike is an understatement of massive proportions. This book first appeared in 1878 (anonymously), and again in 1887 with author attribution. The book was well known in scholarly circles primarily and attracted a good bit of attention, both positive and negative. The public, however, seemed almost unaware of the stunning con-

clusions and the research supporting those conclusions, until or unless they read of Russell's work in the footnotes of the commentaries. Scholars have recognized and grappled with this imminence element, that is the stated nearness of the day of the Lord, seldom finding satisfactory answers. Scholars such as David Strauss accused Jesus of failure. Later, Bultmann said that every school boy knows that Jesus predicted his coming and the end of the world for his generation, and every school boy knows it did not happen. C.S. Lewis also could not resolve the apparent failed eschatology. Bertrand Russell rejected Christianity due to the failed eschatology - as he perceived it - of Jesus and the Bible writers. As a result of these "skeptical" authors, modern Bible scholarship has followed in their path and Bible commentaries today almost casually assert the failure of the Bible writers - and Jesus - in their eschatological predictions. This is where Russell's work is of such importance. While Russell was not totally consistent with his own arguments and conclusions, nonetheless, his work is of tremendous importance and laid the groundwork for the modern revolution known as the preterist movement. Russell systematically addressed virtually every New Testament prediction of the eschaton. With incisive clarity and logical acumen, he sweeps aside the almost trite objections to the objective nature of the Biblical language of imminence. With excellent linguistic analysis, solid hermeneutic and powerful exegetical skills, Russell shows that there is no way to deny that Jesus and his followers not only believed in a first century, end of the age parousia, but, they taught it as divine truth claiming the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as their authority. Russell not only fully established the undeniable reality of the first century imminence of "the end," he powerfully and carefully shares with the reader that "the end" that Jesus and the N.T. writers were anticipating was not the end of the time space continuum (end of the world). It was in fact, the end of the Old Covenant Age of Israel that arrived with the cataclysmic destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70. Russell properly shows how the traditional church has so badly

missed the incredible significance of the end of that Old Covenant Age. Russell's work is a stunning rejection – and corrective -- of what the “Orthodox” historical “Creedal” church has and continues to affirm. The reader may well find themselves wondering how the “divines” missed it so badly! Further, the reader will discover that Russell's main arguments are an effective, valid and true assessment of Biblical eschatology. And make no mistake, eschatology matters.

Don K. Preston.